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EDITORIAL

The Search goes on. But unlike so many of our contemporaries in a befuddled and pluralistic culture, we know something of the End that guides our search, the Truth that brooks no compromise. We can poke and probe any new ideas heralded in the marketplace because we have a measure with which to gauge their worth. Nor is this an idle exercise for monastic women who have so radically withdrawn themselves from the marketplace. Beneath a semblance of newness, the world is still asking age-old questions about the meaning of human life. And beneath the modern solutions proffered, there lurk the same mistakes and misconceptions that have consistently recurred throughout the history of religious and philosophical thought since the dawn of rational reflection.

The withdrawal is for the sake of purity of heart. And the purity of heart is for the sake of seeing -- the one true God, and all else that lives and moves and has its being in him. The words we speak and write reflect our relationship with the Word who is Truth incarnate. In today's world, where the market value of words is continually dropping, it takes considerable faith and courage to maintain that truth exists and that it can be communicated to others with convincing arguments.

The Dominican vocation manifests itself in a diversity of gifts, and we need not all be preachers or writers. But none of us can escape this wrestling with the Word, which is the seeking, pondering and supplication that characterizes our whole monastic way of life. In this issue of DMS we continue to examine the world, with its insights and beauties and distortions, and we also articulate the deeper realities of this world as God knows it to be. May our ongoing search, both published and hidden, be salt and light and leaven for ourselves, the Order, the Church, and all seekers of good will.

Sister Claire, O.P. North Guilford

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SPECTRUM OF THE 20th CENTURY IN THE LIGHT OF THE MONASTIC PARADIGM

Sister Maria Agnes, OP Summit

PREMISE

The Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar boldly suggests that "both the tradition and modern philosophy are so rich that living water can be summoned forth from the rock at innumerable points provided only that an original thinker is at hand to strike the rock." (1)

Like the <u>chiaroscuro</u> in painting, the entire history of philosophy is a patchwork of light and darkness. The task of this paper is to present the diversity of contemporary thought the way a ray of light breaks into prismatic colors by passing through an iridescent crystal, thus displaying its broad range of colors and wavelengths.

There are difficulties involved in studying contemporary philosophy. It is not easy to determine its cultural influences because of its shifting perspectives. Contemporary philosophy includes the major currents of thought which are the extensions of and reactions to the previous philosophies as well as the new approaches developed in the 20th century. It is also concerned with speculative and practical questions that are at the center of current issues pertaining to reality, especially that of human existence. All philosophies, in fact, are concerned with the tragic and comic dimensions of the human condition. A modest attempt will be made to mention philosophers and philosophies that have had their greatest impact within the 20th century, and to suggest the non-polemical role of monasticism vis-a-vis contemporary thought and culture.

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO

The 20th century is an age of dispersion in philosophy. There are divergent schools of thought making little or no effort to communicate with one another, but all laying claim to truth. Each one presents a worldview of great imagination, magnitude and power, and each one poses a challenge to the dignity of the human person and to the existence of God. Philosophical pluralism is part of a global multiculturalism which generates a variety of life styles and ethical norms. Contemporary man, who is historically and culturally conditioned, has accommodated a variety of options and moral choices in his intellectual adventure.

Our century is marked by an increased concern for science and technology that has resulted in the explosion of knowledge in every field. All this knowledge, however, comes from the scientific analysis of nature, including man, e.g. genetic engineering. Empirical knowledge has become the ultimate fact and philosophy has been reduced to a rational interpretation of the findings of the empirical sciences. The concepts of God and the soul have lost their meaning in terms of sensory experience. God cannot be known and demonstrated because he is not an object of empirical knowledge. (2)

Secular models in thinking and living have appeared in the world of consumerism and the mass media. Technological culture has generated a secularized philosophy which is not in direct opposition to Christianity but is a re-definition of the meaning of basic Christian doctrines, a re-interpretation of the Bible, and the rejection of original sin. In the U.S., only 30% believe in the Real Presence. Sacraments are widely thought by Catholics to be nothing other than symbolic actions. Moral illiteracy is widespread. Many students in Catholic schools cannot name the Ten Commandments, much less try to practice them. Moral norms are self-generated, independent of the divine will, the natural and ecclesiastical laws.(3)

Apart from the concern with science, philosophers of the 20th century have become increasingly aware of man and his problems. They philosophize about man as historical, and as a being-in-process toward the future. Monadic individualism and self-fulfillment are the modern concepts of man as autonomous self. "Be original, be unique, be special," were the slogans of the 1960's. Another major concern of postmodern individualism is a sterile appetite for pleasure and a fear of pain, disease and aging. Man is now able to manipulate the world of nature and maximize his control over life and death.

In traditional psychology, the study of man was primarily the study of the psyche or soul, and the problem of body-soul relationship. Now, dualistic, monistic and materialistic philosophies have emerged with the rise of new sciences in an attempt to answer the question: "Who is man?" As a consequence, psychology and its related disciplines have developed a closer affinity to the natural and physical sciences, especially mathematics. (4)

This, however, is not the whole picture. There is a glimmer of hope in the horizon where the philosophy of science has reappeared. Scientists are now turning to the philosophical concepts of the world of nature. The traditional philosophy of nature is gaining support among thinkers who are trying to integrate the concepts of first principles and ultimate reality with the rapid advances in science. Mathematical physics has begun to open up to the possibility of a transcendent Being.

PROFILES AND LANDMARKS

Philosophy's fundamental questions have not changed in 2,800 years but have developed in many different ways. Man has the innate capacity to wonder, to be amazed, to believe and to doubt. Philosophy reveals the positive side of doubt. Certainty that appears to be answers are sometimes but standpoints from which one is able to ask particular questions. That was what had happened in the 25 centuries of recorded philosophy in the West.

Two main currents of thought reached their high noon in the 20th century: Analytic Philosophy which had branched out into Logical Positivism and Linguistic Analysis; and Continental Philosophy with its offshoots in Phenomenology and Existentialism. We have been very selective as regards the protagonists and philosophical movements included in this study.

Analytic Philosophy dominated Anglo-American thought in the mid-1970's. George Edward Moore (1873-1958) and Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872-1970), both of the British school, were immensely influential in promoting the shift from Idealism to Realism. Analytic Philosophy centers upon logical analysis. Logic plays a key role in this philosophy. Moore, a realist to the core, wrote his major thesis, Principia Ethica, in which he addressed three questions. Can the good be known by direct perception? What is the nature of sense perception? Do other minds and material things exist?(5) Russell, a logician and pacifist, is best known for his work in mathematical logic and his advocacy of nuclear disarmament. His major work, Human Knowledge, Its Scope and Limits, has a threefold aim: to reduce to the most simple terms the claims of human knowledge; to show that mathematics can be deduced from a small number of logical principles; and to show that it is possible to know something about reality from ordinary language which, for Russell, is a disguised description of life-world situations. For Russell, the basic reality is matter. In his monumental work, Principia Mathematica, he shows his robust sense of reality and empiricist leanings (10.249-250). Russell's collaboration with Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) led to mathematical logic. Logical positivism is an activity of clear thinking. In this philosophy, moral, aesthetic and metaphysical values cannot be verified and are, therefore, meaningless. A nihilistic thought! Whitehead, however, had wider interests beyond mathematical logic. own philosophy of nature combines metaphysics and cosmology and concentrates on actual beings and their dynamic togetherness in forming "eternal objects," thus, achieving constant novelty. For Whitehead, everything in process is always new because events are the stuff from which nature is formed. This is the central concern of his book called Process and Reality (12.635-637).

Linguistic Analysis is a critique of common sense opinions expressed in ordinary language. This is an attempt to solve the puzzles and paradoxes that arise in the confusions and mistakes of philosophical thought. All philosophy is a critique of language, according to Austrian born English philosopher, Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889-1951). In his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, he raised the questions on how language is possible and how a speaker can be understood by another person. He then proposed the answer that correct speech describes a life-situation in the world of reality and added that there exists a realm of unsayable things. Philosophical Investigations, the crown of his life work, deals with the complexity of philosophy which lies not on its subject matter but in man's "knotted understanding." He also said that the result of sound philosophical reflection is not a truth discovered but a confusion dissolved. Wittgenstein devised "language games" to unravel those "knots" in the understanding. He regarded mathematical logic as an ordinary language which opens up to the world of action. Through the development of mathematical logic, the computer, a linguistic machine, has attained its present capacities and power. There is a common ground between the thinking of analytic philosophers and the computer theorists (12.719-720).

It was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who first used the term phenomenon, a thing as it appears to and is constructed by the mind as distinguished from a noumenon or thing-in-itself. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), German-Jewish philosopher, built a school of philosophy which focuses on the study, description and analysis of experienced reality as it immediately presents itself to consciousness. By examining an object or event, the observer gradually arrives at an intuition or a grasp of the real nature of that object/event. Phenomenology describes and analyzes inner experience from the inside of the experience itself. This method is an effort to resolve the tension between Empiricism, which stresses observable sense data, and Rationalism, which stresses reason and theory. Husserl insisted that one must begin to philosophize without previous assumptions as to the real existence or non-existence of what is apparent to consciousness. enough that the object of consciousness is there. The emphasis is on the immediacy of the experience. Husserl's doctrine is derived from St. Thomas' theory of knowledge. In his later work, Logical Investigations, Husserl united his analysis of consciousness with mathematical logic. This reversal in his thinking developed into a personal life-world philosophy with the ego at the centre. (6.171-172). Blessed Edith Stein (1891-1942), a Roman Catholic convert from Judaism, a Carmelite nun, spiritual writer and martyr, was one of the leading philosophers at the University of Gottingen. She had been a student and, later on, an assistant of Husserl. As a Carmelite nun in Cologne, she completed her metaphysical work,

Finite and Eternal Being which was an attempt to synthesize the philosophies of St. Thomas and Husserl. At the Carmelite monastery at Echt in the Netherlands, she wrote a spiritual treatise, The Science of the Cross, a phenomenological study of St. John of the Cross. Her significant contribution to contemporary philosophy was her attempt to use methods of phenomenology within the framework of Thomistic metaphysics (11.238). Pope John Paul II finds in phenomenology a new and advantageous approach to the human person. Max Scheler (1874-1928), German social and ethical philosopher, is noted for his phenomenological approach after the method of Husserl. He converted to Catholicism in 1920. Scheler's significant work, The Nature of Sympathy, gives room for a more intimate appreciation of feelings and emotions associated with man's experience of the good, the true and the beautiful. theistic tone of On the Eternal in Man describes man's awareness An evolutionary pantheism later appeared in of the sacred. The Place of Man in the Universe in which he stated that God and man evolve together in life. Pope John Paul II observes that Scheler has downplayed the factor of intellect and will as the normative aspect of the moral law. (6)

Existentialism began in Europe after World War I and has become widely known since the mid-20th century. The horrors of two world wars and the ensuing nuclear threat have convinced contemporary thinkers of the irrational nature of human existence. The Existentialist philosophers have attempted to depict the angst or anxiety that pervades contemporary culture and to show how each individual must create in himself a sense of personal responsibility. The method begins with a descriptive study of human attitudes and acts rather than with abstract philosophical definitions and moral principles. Through the use of novels, plays, short story, poetry and literary criticism, existentialist philosophers seek to analyze human emotions and passions in order to find out the meaning of human existence. Existentialism is a prophetic protest against the reduction of human life to nothing but the interplay of physical forces and energies. True enough, this philosophy goes beyond mathematical physics but in no way does it ascend to the sublime truth of a personal God of revelation. Existentialist thought stresses authenticity, honesty, freedom of conscience in place of abstract moral principles; it also encourages an ethics that answers the demands of each concrete After Vatican II, existentialism became the common substitute for the philosophy of St. Thomas. Christian existentialism is Fideism, namely, faith without reason as opposed to Rationalism which is reason without faith. (7)

A philosopher is one who asks why there is something rather than nothing at all. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), German philosopher and a critic of technological culture, was influenced by Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche and Edmund Husserl. His

fascination with the verb "to be" led to the writing of his great work, Being and Time which brings to light the fundamental question, "What is the meaning of being?" For Heidegger, man is not simply involved in a flow of events. Memory of the past and awareness of the present moment tend towards the future. Did he go on to contemplate a Supreme Being? His philosophy makes no definite statement about God but he does not deny God's existence or man's capacity to seek God. Heidegger held his ground by asserting that philosophy is not equipped to discover anything about God. philosophical journey led him backward from modern technology to the pre-Socratic understanding of the cosmos (5.800-802). Karl Theodor Jaspers (1883-1969), who began as a psycho-pathologist, applied the phenomenological method to clinical psychiatry during the years of his medical practice. Later on, he shifted to philosophy as an empirical psychologist. For Jaspers, existence is man's freedom of being in the world. Jaspers gives emphasis upon the idea of the authentic self, in Kierkegaardian style, but this authentic self is set against a transcendent Being. World War II, he developed a World Philosophy for the establishment of a free world through an international community, the United Did Jaspers admit the reality of God? Yes, he did, but Nations. his faith is purely philosophical because he did not accept God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ (6.508-510). The philosophical inquiry and spiritual quest of Gabriel Honoré Marcel (1889-1973) took a threefold path: music, drama and philosophy. The music of Bach and Mozart played a key role in his spiritual development. His own piano compositions and improvisations were an expression of his communion with transcendent reality. The plays he wrote touched on life experiences which were later on to be explored in his philosophical meditations. Marcel's conversion to Catholicism in 1929 was the culmination of years of philosophical reflections on the meaning of faith and existence. In his significant essays, On the Ontological Mystery, Marcel explores the nature of being and person. Man may deny as well as affirm his existence and either fulfill or frustrate his need to participate in the fullness of being through dialogue and relationships with others. For Marcel, human freedom and the acceptance of God's moral law do not contradict each other (7.820-821). In his work, Being and Nothingness, Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), places human consciousness, or nothingness, in juxtaposition with being or Sartre gives emphasis on individual freedom, human dignity and social responsibility in Existentialism and Humanism. Paradoxically, a defender of the poor and the marginalized in society, Sartre's writings are addressed to the bourgeois intellectual readers. He denies God's existence and religious faith. For him, acceptance of a God-based morality is the failure of man to recognize his own freedom to set personal goals and decide upon moral norms in society. Free choice is a cardinal element of Sartre's philosophy (10.460-461).

The task of rethinking the scholastic heritage continues in all areas of thought. As a result of the papal recommendations after Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter, Aeterni Patris, there has been a renewal within Scholasticism that is sometimes referred to as Neo-Thomism. The Existential Thomists were Etienne Henry Gilson(1884-1978) and Jacques Maritain (1882-1973). Gilson, a French Christian philosopher and historian of medieval thought, was one of the most eminent international scholars of the 20th century. His in-depth reflections on Cartesianism and Scholasticism led him to the study of medieval philosophy. wrote The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas and summed up his studies of all medieval thinkers in History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages. Gilson acknowledges that his own understanding and interpretation of Thomistic thought underwent considerable development (5.270). For Maritain, science, art, philosophy, poetry and mysticism are among many legitimate ways of knowing reality. Maritain sought to bring Thomism into living relations with contemporary culture. His thought incorporates elements from classical and modern philosophies. He also draws upon anthropology, sociology, psychology and art. For Maritain, Thomism is a form of Existential Intellectualism because to exist is to act. Among his major works are The Degrees of Knowledge; Moral Philosophy; and Art and Scholasticism (7.854).

Transcendental Thomism can be traced to the writings of Désire Mercier, Maurice Blondel, Emerich Coreth, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Maréchal as a result of their confrontation with Kant and other forms of Idealism. Transcendental Thomism provides a knowledge of God by an act of the intellect rooted in love. (8)

We can also mention Pragmatism, a distinctly American movement in philosophy which owes it origin to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) whose "pragmatic test" attempted to prove that ideas could be understood only by looking to their effects. This is a result-oriented philosophy (9.241-242). Truth is what works in practice, according to William James (1842-1910), who worked at the intersection of psychology and philosophy. In The Varieties of Religious Experience, James assessed the extensive body of mystical literature, and the accounts of persons who claimed to have had such experiences. James used a pragmatic criterion for accepting some of these accounts as authentic (6.487-489). John Dewey (1859-1952) initiated a progressive movement in the U.S. educational system. Dewey stressed the priority of action over theory and of experience over principles. For Dewey, nature is the ultimate reality and man is the product of nature. finds his meaning and goals in the here and now (4.51-53).

Theology is a continuous interpretation of a religious tradition for which the primary metaphor is the Word of God. Hermeneutics, the study of understanding a text through interpretation, was influenced in part by Heidegger's concepts of

"being in the world." Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-), German philosopher, formed this "understanding" into a philosophy. His Truth and Method is a significant philosophical statement on hermeneutics (5.70). Can we cut off meaning from being? Or language from experience? A new approach to hermeneutics which has even more to do with the interpretation of texts, is to be found in the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-) who offers a theory called Deconstructionism. In his popular but unintelligible work, Margins of Philosophy, Derrida pays attention to the differences between words and the expectation which they set up without consideration of their designation (4.26). What can we make out of this?

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH

"Whatever is true, whatever is just, we must think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Truth, like love, is a many-splendored thing. That is why it does not cease to attract the intellect "for the splendor of the divine truth received into the mind helps the understanding and does not detract from its dignity but adds greatly to its nobility, keenness and stability."(9) This truth cannot be studied, contemplated and put into practice except by loving and when this truth comes about through love, it becomes universal.(10) We are endowed with intellect and will and are bound by our nature and moral responsibility to search for truth, above all, divine truth. Once we come to possess it, we are bound to commit our lives according to its demands.

Truth is related to the pursuit of wisdom as goodness is related to things outside the mind. Nothing is entirely evil or deprived of good whatsoever. In the same way, no philosophy is totally false, without any mixture of truth. The intellect is attracted to false fundamental thought precisely because of the appearance given to it by the grains of truth that it contains.(11) The truth of a philosophy does not depend on how many people agree to it but whether or not it is in conformity with reality. The fact that very few grasp the truth does not diminish its objective validity. St. Thomas, in his letter to brother John on how to study says, "Do not heed by whom a thing is said, but rather what is said you should commit to memory."

There is a natural level of philosophy accessible to us all. This common-sense philosophy cannot give our concepts an exact formulation. Our intellect is polished and refined when we study philosophy. We study to overcome any rationalistic mood by learning how philosophy, spirituality and contemplation are interrelated and how they are to be integrated into our monastic life. The study of philosophy is an essential value for the development of human and religious maturity. Through study, we can transcend our own times and culture; we can critique and synthesize the different areas of knowledge that make up our initial and permanent formation. Thought is at the service of

faith. Theology today has many conversation partners in non-Christian religions. Good philosophy enables us to deal critically with theological pluralism and to develop models for reflection and contemplation on the mysteries of our Christian Philosophy is necessary when we interpret a biblical or monastic text or when we reconstruct an historical situation and mentality in different cultures and at different times. An authentic philosophical anthropology is necessary in all areas of monastic studies as well as in monastic government. St. Thomas provides us with the principles to analyze carefully what kind of metaphysics is hidden beneath the surface of modern applications of a philosophy, e.g. freedom, authority, technology, feminism, abortion, euthanasia, and so forth. For this reason, the philosophy of St. Thomas deserves to be carefully studied and accepted with conviction by reason of its spirit of openness and universalism, characteristics that are not found in many trends of contemporary thought. (12)

Philosophy, in the natural order of monastic studies, leads us to him who is Wisdom and Truth incarnate. The contemplative nun who is able to rise to the loftiest height of speculation goes straight to the very source of all truth and finds the answer to the deepest yearning of the human spirit. Truth is a Person and the ultimate end of our search for truth is union with God who is the absolute fullness of truth. Only then can our thirst for truth be ultimately satisfied. St. Paul speaks of "taking captive all human systems of thought for the truth of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Our philosophical study makes sense when we enter into the presence of truth which is the love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. Then and only then will we see all aspects of truth in different philosophies as reflections of this innermost core of truth as it is presented to us through the magisterium of the Church.

THE PROCLAMATION OF BEING

The history of philosophy is the history of "to be." The truth of a philosophy depends on the extent to which it accepts "being" as a gift from the Source of all being. Otherwise, philosophy degenerates into rationalism and positivism. Aristotle warns us that a slight initial error in philosophy eventually grows to enormous proportions. (13) In René Descartes' "I think, therefore I am," thought determines existence; whereas for St. Thomas, existence determines thought. I think the way I think because I am that which I am, a creature, and because He is He who is, the absolute uncreated mystery who has revealed Himself to man as Love. (14) That was Descartes' initial error!

Western culture has shifted from the mystery of being to things and the ideology of the machine. It is the glory of the human intellect to recognize that there is indeed a Being who is absolutely transcendent and whose essence is his very act of existing. This transcendent Being is also immanent and is present in our midst in a unique mode of existing. On the basis of our experience both of the visible world and the interior life of the spirit, we can thus arrive at the knowledge of God (Cf. Rom. 1:20). It is from this proclamation of being that the philosophy of St. Thomas derives the ability to grasp and to affirm all that shows itself to the human intellect through lived experience. It also derives the ability to grasp and affirm the being of the knower or the person who knows. (15)

Does our liturgy involve the philosophy of being? Yes, The Eucharistic sacrifice bears witness to a created universe which brings up the source of being. The Creed and the Preface are a chant of praise of existence. God has entrusted us with the care of the earth (Gen. 2:15). In our present culture, the mastery of the earth is exercised by minds darkened by the absence of God, by the death of God, resulting in ecological disasters. At the Offertory of the Mass, we affirm our stewardship of the earth in the presence of God. The Consecration is the supreme moment of the contact between faith and reason in the mystery of transubstantiation. At Communion we proclaim that love and being are inseparable. Being is creative love and love is the source of being. How then can we think adequately of creation without a Creator? Each being is something perceptible, something desirable, something intelligible in its self-giving (the good), its self-expression (the true), and its selfmanifestation (the beautiful).(16)

When we sing psalms and hymns at the Liturgy of the Hours, we proclaim the primacy of a transcendent Being in praise, adoration, dependence and thanksgiving. Through the use of our body in worship, we affirm the unity of matter and spirit in response to the dualism of Descartes and his followers. Our monastic search for God in Lectio divina and prayer is also a revelation of God. Prayer is the official language of a creature. Contrary to the thought of Immanuel Kant, we put ourselves in contact with God when we pray, for God is knowable exteriorly and interiorly. God is a Person, not a natural force or energy or a World Soul. He is also pure Spirit, transcendent over the cosmos and distinct from it. We proclaim these truths when we pray.

CHRISTIAN WISDOM

Philosophy is not only a love of wisdom but is itself the wisdom that is loved. Moreover, philosophy teaches its own wisdom. Since reality is the heart of philosophy, our search for

wisdom begins from day-to-day experience. "Nothing is in the mind that was not first in the senses," is a famous Thomistic On the basis of our reflection on sensory experiences, we can arrive at the truth that the human mind is immaterial and immortal. This world which we perceive in ordinary experience is dependent upon an infinite source which we call God. realities, except God, are a unity of form and matter. form and matter in things is highly appropriate to the sacramental character of our Catholic faith expressed in the humanity of Jesus and in the sacraments. Furthermore, an effect must resemble in some way its cause. St. Thomas has worked out a theory of analogy whereby certain qualities that are found in the world are ascribed to God. Thomistic thought, our bread and butter philosophy, can build up a picture of the divine nature by describing its perfections which are found in varying degrees in the world. (17)

True wisdom is more than an intellectual passion for truth. It is an adventure of the human spirit and a total gift of self. The contemplative's love of wisdom is nourished by her love of God. Our non-polemical role in the dialogue with the philosophical influences that are shaping our culture is possible only through love. Love is not blind; it empowers us to see the truth as it is. Love, according to von Balthasar, will enable us to give our conversation partner, namely, contemporary philosophy, its rightful place in the dialogue. Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, is at the center of this encounter because all aspects of truth "stand around him at a greater or lesser distance."(18)

Philosophical systems come and go but Christian wisdom is not subject to change regarding first principles and ultimate reality. There is no philosophy which is theologically neutral because each philosophy has a theological a priori. Correlatively, since God speaks as man in Jesus Christ, theology is dependent upon philosophy. Why so? Because philosophy helps theology get started by showing the compatibility of divine revelation with human reason. True philosophy is able to philosophize toward Christian faith as its preamble; it also operates within the faith and attunes the mind and heart to the Word of God. (19)

Jesus Christ taught the way, the truth and the life as embodied in his own person. He was the power and wisdom of the Father; he spoke with the authority of God himself and sealed his testimony with miracles and his own resurrection (Cf. Cor. 1:24). For St. Augustine, the true philosopher is one who loves God, the divine wisdom. St. Thomas says the same thing in different words: "Almost the entire purpose of philosophy is directed toward the knowledge and love of God." Thomistic philosophy naturally flows into what von Balthasar calls "theology in one's knees." Prayer is the conscious heart of theology. If you pray, you are a theologian, says the 4th century desert father Evagrius of Pontus. (20)

We, who belong to an Order which fosters study and contemplation, have a pearl of great price to offer the Church and the world. Monastic life embodies much that is best and desirable in contemporary culture: a spirit of openness to new possibilities of achieving the good, the true and the beautiful; a respect for the dignity and uniqueness of the human person as expressed in our Rule and Constitutions; an affirmation of pluralism in our community life; a democratic form of government; a concern for freedom and authenticity in our observances; and a desire for simplicity of life in oneness of mind and heart.

2000 A.D.

Postmodernity is upon us. We are witnessing a global and multicultural evolution. The world we live in is being configured by technology, demographics and mass communications. Postmodern man is probing for new answers to the most fundamental question: "What does it mean to be a human being?" Man has rediscovered the sacred dimension of human existence and is trying to identify it. By the year 2000, there will be a greater diversity of ethical, philosophical and religious wisdom. Augustine DiNoia calls our attention to a new agenda which is gathering momentum in the Church today. "After centuries of accommodation to the challenges of skeptical and pantheistic Western philosophies," DiNoia observes, "our Christian faith is now being challenged by new conversation partners, the non-Christian religious traditions."(21)

Are we going to accomodate these religious traditions on an equal level with our Catholic faith and practice? Are we going to blend into a pluralistic mindset of this new age and that of the next century? Or are we going to take a rigid position in favor of medieval philosophy? We can be blinded by the brilliance of Thomistic thought and reject other points of view. Dialogue, however, is not acceptance of any philosophy but a dialectic with the other position in which some aspects of truth are to be accepted Other philosophical insights can as vehicle for Chrisitan wisdom. be added to tradition, but not replace it. We do not belong to a syncretistic Order. We synthesize by bringing forth something new and good from our dialogue with every culture. Dominicans have a critical function vis-a-vis the philosophies they encounter in the marketplace. It is the sublime task of Christian wisdom to bring contemporary and postmodern philosophies "into the transforming fire and to make them transcendent and eternal. "(22) St. Thomas assimilate Aristotelianism? Did he not transform and refine it and developed a great synthesis of theology? St. Thomas, the great synthesizer, left questions open-ended for further study and research. His philosophy can be repristinated and updated in its details for the 21st century. Recent scholars advocate the revival and renewal of the metaphysics of transcendence and of being. The new metaphysics sees man as consciousness, as freedom, as transcendence, and as a seeker of truth to whom being is both hidden and manifest. The contribution of contemporary philosophy

can be helpful in our understanding of person and being in the philosophy of St. Thomas. A great deal remains to be investigated in this field of study. Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy of divine transcendence manifested in the human face is now being used by theologians. (23) Let us heed the words of St. Paul; "Test everything and retain what is good" (I Thess. 5:21); and "do not conform yourselves to the spirit of the world" (Rom. 12:2).

We are called to be lovers of wisdom. We are called to be contemplatives and saints. We can genuinely love the world by desiring and willing its perfection in the world to come.

ENDNOTES

- (1) "On the Tasks of Catholic Philosophy in our Time," in Communio Spring 1993: 177.
- (2) Ronda Chervin, Ph.D. and Eugene Kevane, Ph.D., Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Christian Philosophy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 364.
- (3) William Kilpatrick, Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong:

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- (4) Chervin, op. cit., 268.
- (5) The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Micropedia 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 301-302. Future references to this work will be indicated by volume and page numbers in parenthetical entries after the text, thus (8.301-302).
- (6) Karol Wojtyla, "An Assessment of the Possibility of Erecting a Christian Ethics on the Principle of Max Scheler," diss., Jagellonian University, 1953; quoted in Tad Szulc, John Paul II; the Biography (New York: Scribner, 1995) 182; Cf. Kenneth Schmitz, "Let's Talk Philosophy," in The National Catholic Register 7 August 1994: 1, 9.
- (7) Chervin, op. cit., 364.

- (8) William A. Wallace, OP, <u>The Elements of Philosophy</u> (New York: Alba House, 1977), 328-331.
- (9) Pope Leo XIII, <u>Aeterni Patris</u>; excerpted in Chervin, op. cit., 444.
- (10) Pope John Paul II, <u>Crossing the Threshold of Hope</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 162.
- (11) Cf. Chervin, op. cit., 287.
- (12) John Paul II, "The Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of our Times," in Chervin, op. cit., 493. This was an address given in 1979 at the Angelicum in Rome to an International Congress of St. Thomas to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter Aeterni Patris.
- (13) Aristotle, Treatise on the Heavens I, 5; A 271.
- (14) John Paul II, Crossing the Threshold of Hope, 38
- (15) Ibid., 34, 198; Cf. Summa Theologica I. q. 29 a.
- (16) Cf. Martin Bieler, "Meta-anthropology and Christology: on the Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in Communio Spring 1993: 142.
- (17) Aidan Nichols, OP, The Shape of Catholic Theology (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 51.
- (18) Cf. von Balthasar, op. cit., 153, 162, 164.
- (19) Cf. Bieler, op. cit., 136.
- (20) Cf. Nichols, op. cit., 26.
- (21) "Philosophical Theology in the Perspective of Religious Diversity," in <u>Theological Studies</u> 49.3: 401-416.
- (22) von Balthasar, op. cit., 160.
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PHILOSOPHY: ITS INFLUENCE ON OUR CULTURE AND ON OUR CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Sister Mary Rose Dominic, O.P. Summit

Philosophy, literally the love of wisdom, is defined in the dictionary as "the knowledge of phenomena as explained by, and resolved into, causes and reasons, powers and laws," or systematic body of general principles." In reference to religion it has been very aptly defined as "faith seeking understanding." It is a discipline of many facets since it seeks to find a rational explanation of the entire mystery of creation and especially of It is preoccupied with principles, therefore, with human life. causes and effects and with the laws that govern the universe. Since it concerns itself with a very broad spectrum of material problems it is, of its very nature, a complex and difficult subject to investigate. But since it pertains to the nature of man to question the reason of being, to investigate its source and its end and the laws by which it is governed, the science of philosophy has been active in human society from the dawn of history.

We are accustomed to think of the Greek philosophers as the originators of this intellectual discipline but we know that they preceded by others, not as brilliant, perhaps, contributing a significant share of reasoned analysis to the problems with which men of later ages would concern themselves in The Greek philosophers are a classical an ever-greater degree. example of how far man can come by his reason alone to a knowledge of God, by whatever name they wished to designate Him as the supreme being, the necessary cause of all things. Such knowledge, however, was of its very nature imperfect and incomplete. were groping to find God, though they could not quite reach Him, and yet it was from Him alone that they could receive an authentic answer to the questions they asked. For they knew nothing of His divine revelation to man, and while human science and scholarship can presume to try to answer the "how" of creation, they could never answer the "why." The author of creation alone could do that, and this He actually did in divine revelation to certain predestined individuals in every age of time from the very beginning.

The Church defines revelation as the testimony which God gave to mankind from the beginning concerning Himself, His nature, and the works and the reasons of being of all that is, especially man himself. As Scripture says, "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also created the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). The study of God as found in divine revelation is called "theology," sometimes referred to as "the science of God," and since this discipline has also existed in every age we find that, from the beginning, philosophy and theology have walked side by side down the path of the ages. Philosophy investigates the mystery of God

through reason; theology, through the certainty of divine revelation; the former, as a servant of natural knowledge; the latter as a master of Truth and the divinely accredited teacher of mankind. Though closely allied they are nevertheless distinct disciplines. Indeed, it has been said that theology begins with God while philosophy ends with God. Saint Bonaventure said that if philosophy does not enter theology, it remains incomplete, that is, unfinished in its quest.

Let us, therefore, look briefly at the procession of philosophy down the path of the ages. It began in the distant ages of antiquity, well before the time of the Greek philosophers, and continues down to our own day. The intellectual acumen of the great masters of antiquity like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle astounds the world today, but the thought of the various philosophical systems was as varied as it was manifold, even as it is among the philosophers of today. In later ages, the thought and philosophical systems of the ancient masters helped to shape many important aspects of the social and political life of the civilized The Greek civilization, for example, which permeated the whole civilized world at the coming of Christ, was laid in its first foundations by the thought and ideas of the great Greek philosophers, and by a special design of God's providence it reached its full flowering at the time of Christ. Its highly developed and beautiful language was admirably suited to the elucidation of the complex and delicate thought of Christian theology, and because it was spoken universally by the educated classes in the first days of Christianity, it became the language in which the Gentile world first heard the message of the Gospel.

But while the ancient pagan philosophy contained much that was good, it contained also a greater or lesser element of error. The Church, perceiving the elements of good, used them to elucidate the theological concepts and doctrines of the Christian faith. We have only to think, for example, of Saint Augustine who inclined towards the concepts of Plato, or Saint Thomas who used the thought of Aristotle to such great advantage.

Again, it was from the various philosophies, ancient or modern, that the great revolutionary movements in the social, economic or political fields took their rise down through the centuries. We shall have occasion to speak in another article on these matters but they merit a brief consideration here also. regard to the evils just mentioned, at various times they cried out for reform and the leaders who arose to combat them were filled with energy and enthusiasm. To give them their due, their aims in the beginning were noble and praiseworthy but it frequently happened that the cosmic dimensions of the problems they addressed overwhelmed them and compelled them to find a different method to resolve them. Unfortunately these solutions were often devised without any reference to faith or religion. Indeed, the reformers frequently blamed God for the evils they deplored or else denied that He even existed or cared for mankind.

If man were to improve his condition, then it could only be by his own efforts and so, in trying to heal the ills of society, they completely removed the basic foundation which alone could bring true amelioration and happiness to their people. with the loss of faith in God's loving providence over their lives all hope of real happiness was destroyed. Then, having completed the work of destruction, and in order to fill the void created by the absence of God, these advocates of freedom constituted themselves the sole teachers of true wisdom and in order to expedite the work of reform, they assumed complete control of the nation and imposed their sovereign will and ideas upon the people. This was frequently done by means of violence and terrorism, mass destruction of those elements or groups who opposed them. became, in effect, dictators and the misery they thus brought upon their people was immeasurably greater than the evils they tried to We have only to think of the horrors of the French Revolution or Communism and its related systems, or the cosmic destruction of World Wars I and II to realize these truths.

Yet the picture is not one of unrelieved darkness for even with the grave defects inherent in these false philosophies of life, the very fact that they tried to combat the real evils of society drew the attention of the common multitudes to their existence and enkindled an ambition to remedy them by worthier Thus the largely ignored principle of the equality of all men took root as a result of the French Revolution and in time led to the improvement of the life of the working classes. Education was gradually made available to all ranks of society, the rights of labor were recognized, and the magnificent declaration of our own Constitution, of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, with liberty and justice for all" became the ideal of every civilized The principle of personal and national freedom for every nation became a primary concern for all the citizens of every country. It is this ambition which underlies the violent conflicts which we behold today in so many nations of the world.

But as so often happens, the abuse of these excellent benefits frequently led to new evils. For example, the idea of personal freedom carried to extremes has often led to license, violence and anarchy, to a lack of respect for the rights of others and a sense of irresponsibility for the common welfare or public safety. Murder and crime became the order of the day so that the average citizen walks in daily peril of his life. Moreover, the whole moral fabric of society seems to be rapidly disintegrating, for there seems to be no longer any sense of right or wrong, good In the moral order, expediency or situation ethics seem to be the primary determining criteria of moral behavior. The idea of accountability to God is scoffed at as utterly ridiculous. Lack of respect for moral integrity has led to the evils of abortion and euthanasia. Most tragic of all is the preoccupation of many people with the dark forces of the occult. As a result of these manifold evils, all sense of moral security seems to have departed from society with very little possibility of an effective appeal from the escalating danger of crime. It is, in effect, a "reign of

moral terror." The preoccupation with evil in its various forms in which so many indulge today seems to stem from a sense of hopelessness which follows inevitably upon the total denial of God. Interest in the occult and Satanism are, in reality, a desperate attempt to find something to replace Him. The tragedy of it all lies in the fact that they are willing to admit the existence of the devil, the prince of darkness, while denying the existence of the God of infinite goodness.

Where can we hope to find protection from such fearful evils? Even a superficial study of the general disintegration of the moral fabric of society shows that the greatest threat lies in the false philosophies from which these evils stem, for these latter inevitably have an effect upon the life and thought of the common multitude. Religious themselves are not immune from their influence. We are all aware of the fact that many religious, both priests and sisters, have become involved in dangerous political and moral ideologies, taking their stand on the side of error and even going so far as to sacrifice their vocation for the causes they advocate.

Where can we find a remedy for this seemingly hopeless situation? We can find it only in Christ, the Light of the World, and in His Church which is, as St. Paul said, "the pillar and ground of Truth (1 Tim. 3:16). His voice rings down through the ages as clearly and convincingly as when He first spoke to the multitudes on the shore, and His message which is to be found in the gospel stands by philosophy to affirm what is good therein and to correct what is erroneous or defective by the certainty of its own Truth. It is from Him and from the revelation that He brought that mankind must seek the authentic answer to the mystery of creation and of human existence. Let us hear what He said of Himself when he laid His credentials before the world during His public life:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life (Jn. 8:12). I am the way and the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly (Jn. 10:10). My teaching is not mine but his who sent me (Jn. 7:16). If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free (Jn. 8:32).

Before He ascended into heaven He commanded His apostles to go forth and teach His gospel to all men. He said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:19-20). It is in this gospel teaching that philosophy will find the answer to all that it seeks to know. Faithful to this mandate and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Twelve went forth after Pentecost to teach the gospel to mankind and their teaching has been transmitted

down through all subsequent ages by the Church. In the first age the Fathers of the Church, by their writings defended or explained the teachings of the Church; chief among them were St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Nanzianzen, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome and St. Augustine. In later ages we have the great Doctors like St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Albert the Great who continued the work of the ancient Fathers for the preservation of the true faith and doctrine of the Church. When we ponder the unbroken continuity of this teaching through the centuries, we think of the words of Jesus, "You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it under the bushel basket but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Mt. 5:13-14).

Our holy Father St. Dominic holds a singular place in that glorious choir of teachers who have transmitted the true doctrine of Christ to the ages. In the liturgical office of his feast, he is saluted as the "light of the Church," for it was his specific charism to be the champion and defender of the truth in its plenary theological sense, that is, the Truth of God, source and principle of all being and life, the Alpha and Omega of all things, the Author of this visible creation. He was called to this specific vocation at the dawn of the 13th century when the tidal waves of heresy were dashing against the very foundations of the The assumption of false premises and the application of false principles, all stemming from a fundamental ignorance of the doctrines of the faith as held and taught by the magisterium of the Church, led to widespread defection from the faith and threatened the very foundations of the Church itself. It was then that the promise of Jesus was most marvelously fulfilled: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28:20). At this crucial hour, to save the Faith that was perishing, He raised up St. Dominic.

His aim from the beginning was to show the solid and which it rested indestructible foundation upon investigation of the nature and scope of the truth it proclaimed. It was imperative to prove that the faith and doctrine of the Church are relevant for every age and civilization and for every level of culture and education, since the truth it teaches is eternal and unchanging. It was necessary, furthermore, to show that the Faith can stand up to the most searching scrutiny of scientific or intellectual investigation and prove its truth, and to prove that the Church which is the divinely appointed guardian and interpreter of the Faith, encompasses all ages and nations within itself. (cf. Dan. 2:44; Rev. 7:9) To remedy the evils which were eroding the foundations of the Faith, he saw that what was needed was the enlightening of men's minds by a systematic and comprehensive course of instruction in the fundamental doctrines of His vocation lay, therefore, in the cultivation of the intellect and in the intellectual defense of the Faith. He was preoccupied with principles and sources, all leading back to the Source of truth itself. And in order that his work might endure throughout the ages, he founded his Order which to this day is called the Order of truth, which has the study and teaching of divine truth as its primary goal.

It is precisely in the Dominican vocation and charism that the nuns have their reason for being, for St. Dominic desired that their life of prayer should be especially dedicated to the fruitfulness of the apostolic labors of the Fathers. Safeguarded by silence and enclosure, their life of consecration was like the hidden spring flowing silently beneath the sown field, irrigating the soul and ensuring an abundant future harvest. Their special charism could be summed up in the words of Jesus to His apostles, "Lift up your eyes and see the countries for they are white already to harvest (Jn. 4:35). "The harvest, indeed, is great but the laborers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest" (Mt. 9:37-38).

The response of the Dominican cloistered life, therefore, to all challenges whether ancient or modern, is the reaffirmation that God is All, as the following lines can show:

"In Him alone the heart can find its rest, Its doubts be stilled, its restless yearnings cease: He is the End of Man's eternal quest, His way, His Truth, His Life, His blessed peace." (The author)

St. Augustine summed it all up in his famous phrase, "Our hearts were made for Thee, of God, and they can never rest until they rest in Thee." This is the answer to the basic and perennial quest of all philosophy.



En all that you do, be of one wind and one heart, m peace and concord, in unshakeable love, and in that loving humility which is the guardian of all good things, so that, while your souls find deep and Casting delight in the life of holiness, they may themselves be a source of delight to the Son of God who is blessed for ever and ever.

IS THEOLOGICAL STUDY IMPORTANT FOR DOMINICAN CONTEMPLATIVES?

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It seems to me the frequent references to theological study in our Constitutions make it difficult to bypass the importance of this element in our lives. My main source of reference here will be the nuns' Constitutions wherein I see the legitimacy and importance of theological study and contemplation woven together. LCM is the primary source of my reflections. My conclusion will focus in on the most legitimate and important reason, as I see it, for the use of study as a discipline in the life of a Dominican contemplative.

To begin with I think it might prove interesting to note the difference between legitimacy and importance. Legitimacy suggests legality, validity or correctness whereas importance denotes the value or significance of something. The two may or may not coexist. An example of what I mean follows. Supposing I have stopped at a red traffic light on 16th St. in Washington D. C. during the rush hour. As the light turns green a small child runs out in front of my car. It is very important now that I remain at a standstill in spite of all the horns blowing in back of me. The life of the child is certainly more valuable than the observance of the green traffic light. I attach more significance to importance than to validity.

From the beginning of the Order St. Dominic insisted on study as an "authentic observance" of Dominican life.¹ Would it be reasonable to say he did not require it of the nuns when he began his Order with converts from heresy? Certainly the first nuns of the Order were in need of theological study. "St. Dominic, who viewed study as an essential part of the apostolic life to be led by his friars, was the author of the intellectual bent of his Order.... He made study an essential duty of the Dominican religious."² This quotation is referring to the friars but I find it applicable to the nuns also. Furthermore our father Dominic sent his young friars off to study in Paris against the protestations of many. Following his example this emphasis on theological study has been manifested by most if not all of our Father Masters.

Fr. M. S. Gillet, O. P., in his prefatory letter to the nuns' Constitutions of 1930, presented some facts pertaining to the value of study. Fr. Gillet saw a great need for religious education and definitely wished that doctrinal instruction be given. especially in the novitiate. He spoke of "habitual contact with doctrine which is sound, serious, and well adapted to the intelligence of the religious."³ It was not his desire to make intellectuals of the nuns, but "educated religious", he emphasized, would be better able to know, love and serve God. The study of revealed truths, he noted, would be an aid to meditation which hopefully would lead to contemplation.⁴ Study in his view was a means to sanctification as well as to contemplation, which would serve the nuns in communicating to others the fruits of their contemplation.⁵ In his famous letter he told the nuns there are three stages in the fulfillment of their Dominican vocation. Study, meditation and contemplation are listed in just that order. He explained that intellectual effort enables us to assimilate the truths of faith revealed to us in the study of theology.⁶ This study is essential to provide the mind with the material for meditation in which the activity of the intellectual faculty predominates. It has taken sixty years to see Fr. Gillet's dream come to fulfillment in the present Theological Formation Program.

In addition, the revision of the 1930 Constitutions in 1987 includes an introductory letter from Fr. Fernandez O. P. in which he says:

The contemplative life of the nuns is of the greatest benefit to the apostolate of the Order,...because their contemplation and their life, inasmuch as they are truly and properly Dominican, are from the beginning and by their very nature ordered to the apostolate which the Dominican family excercises as a whole, and in which alone the fullness of the Dominican vocation is to be found.⁷

This quotation, it seems to me, reflects Dominic's desire to see his sons and daughters realize the fullness of their vocation as he conceived it. Now just how is this to be done? Going back to the sources we discover the importance Dominic attached to theological study. This importance reverberates throughout our entire Constitutions. The Fundamental Constitution tells us that we "seek God by observing the norms of the purely contemplative life,studying the truth eagerly, searching the Scriptures with ardent heart, praying intently."

I would like to make reference to one more very important document. In 1990 Fr. Damien Byrne wrote a letter to the nuns of the Order that I think is a very momentous document for us. In it he tells us of the relationship of values and

structures. He tells us the purpose of structures "is to promote and protect the values of religious life." In speaking of the hierarchical ordering of regular observance he ranks common life and the study of sacred truth among the more important values. 10

The study of St. Thomas and the Scriptures are particularly recommended to the nuns in the Constitutions.¹¹ Since theological study pertains to the contemplative life it seems only logical that we pursue this highly recommended value. How are we going to discover the truth necessary for contemplation if we do not study? Theology nourishes faith with the truths of revelation. This further prepares us to contemplate the Word of God in lectio divina which in turn provides us with a fuller understanding of our Constitutions which are saturated with texts from the Gospel.

The human mind has been so constructed by God that it cannot but seek its fulfillment and ultimately this is to be found in divine truth.¹² Permeated with the truths of divine revelation in the study of theology, we are drawn closer into the Trinity, learning more about our Triune God and how to love ourselves and our neighbor as ourselves. In other words we learn to love ourselves and our neighbor as God loves us. Consider this magnificent statement of St. Thomas:

When the mind becomes attached to a thing with intense love and desire, the result is that it sets aside other things. So from the fact that man's mind is fervently inclined by love and desire to divine matters, in which it is obvious that perfection is located, it follows that he cast aside everything that might hold him back from this inclination to God."¹³

Since Thomas teaches us that our final happiness "consists in the contemplation of wisdom, based on the considering of divine matters", 14 is there any possibility of denying the necessity of study in the life of a Dominican? I do not deny the possibility of God's intervention when He grants special graces to faithful souls like St. Therese of the Child Jesus and our own Sts. Martin de Porres and John Macias, to mention only a few. I believe God does intervene and bestow the gift of contemplation on some souls without their having studied theology. However Thomas teaches that grace builds on nature; therefore the usual mode of attaining to contemplation is theological study. "For the contemplative life of which we are speaking is directed to the consideration of divine things....and a man is guided in this through study". 15

Since values are of greater advantage to us than legalities I consider the importance of theological study to be of greater significance than its legitimacy. In writing about the value of theological study Father Congar tells us "theology is an eminent work of faith and charity, a very elevated cult rendered to God, for it consecrates to Him our reason as such, thereby achieving the consecration that faith has made to Him of our understanding as such." ¹⁶

All this is not to deny that danger might lurk in study. Why? Because we all suffer from the ravages of original sin, human nature has the tendency to seek study for intellectual satisfaction as an end in itself. Certainly study can produce vanity, egoism, and the desire for intellectual superiority. Feminine psychology is prone to "greed for knowledge".¹⁷ The dangers can be even greater in the contemplative life where study may serve as a means of escaping indispensable purifications, ¹⁸ but the solution is found in methodical study which is stressed in our present Constitutions. (LCM 100)

It is interesting to note that Pope John Paul II, in speaking about his responsibility for divine truth, says: "Being responsible for the truth also means loving it, in order to bring it closer to ourselves and others in all its saving power." He speaks about the way this is seen in the lives of the saints and continues: "These received most brightly the authentic light that illuminates divine truth and brings close God's very reality, because they appproached this truth with veneration and love--love in the first place for Christ, the living Word of divine truth, and then love for his human expression in the Gospel, tradition, and theology. Today we still need above all that understanding and interpretation of God's Word; we need that theology."

Finally, to follow Christ as a Dominican contemplative is an obligation we took on most willingly at the time of our first profession and renewed for life when we made our solemn profession. We "promise obedience to God and to blessed Mary, and to blessed Dominic and to the Master of the Order of Friars Preachers [and the Prioress...] according to the Rule of Blessed Augustine and the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers until death."

Herein I see an undeniable proof of the importance of theological study for Dominican contemplatives.

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- Pope John Paul II, <u>Redemptor Hominis in The Papal Encyclicals 1958-1981</u> ed. Claudia Carlen (Mcgrath Publishing Co., 1981) 263
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IN PRAISE OF THE GOD OF LOVE: BLESSED ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

Sr. Mary Dolores, O.P. North Guilford, CT

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity was one who truly believed and lived by the truths proclaimed by St. Paul in Ephesians 1:4-5 and Romans 8:29. We, all of us, have been chosen from all eternity to be holy, to live through love in God's presence, to become his adopted children through Jesus Christ and to praise the glory of his grace. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, the idea of predestination formed the kernel of Elizabeth's message. For her it meant exactly what it did for St. Paul--our election to holiness, our being chosen in Christ who redeems us, and our praising the glory of grace. After citing Romans 8:29 Elizabeth exclaimed, "Oh, how I love this thought of St. Paul; here my soul finds rest. I think of the love of Our Lord. Me, he has known, called, justified, and, in the expectation that he will glorify me, I desire to be here and now an unceasing praise of his glory. If you only knew what ineffable joy my soul tastes in the thought that the Father has predestined me to be conformed to the image of his crucified Son. St. Paul has made known to us this divine election, and I feel that I share in it." It is Blessed Elizabeth's strong desire to be conformed to Christ Crucified as well as her "enthusiastic and loving approach to the Trinity" that will be the subject of this paper.

Elizabeth Catez was born at a military camp in the district of Cher in France on July 18, 1880. Mme. Catez wrote of her daughter Elizabeth at 21 months of age, "She is a real devil...she is a big chatterbox!" She again relates that during a parish mission a Sister asked her if Elizabeth had a doll that she could use as the little Jesus in the crib. It would be dressed up so that Elizabeth wouldn't recognize it. The mission was to close with a blessing of the children. Her mother recounts: "I brought the little one to the ceremony. The child was distracted at first by the people who were arriving, but when the Cure announced the blessing from the pulpit, Elizabeth glanced at the creche, recognized her doll and, in a fit of rage, her eyes furious, cried out: 'Jeanette! Give me back my Jeanette!' This passionate and choleric temperament kept growing stronger..." Elizabeth's younger sister Guite remarked that "She was very lively, even quick-tempered! She went into rages that were quite terrible! She was a real little devil." Such are the earliest reports of the future saint! She was a little girl who knew what she wanted.

But there was another side to Elizabeth. She taught her doll to pray with her for her sick grandmother and she always seemed recollected in church. She loved her parents very much. It was largely due to her mother's steadying influence and later, her fidelity to confession and the advice of very good confessors, which helped Elizabeth to struggle against her unruliness.

When she was seven she lost two loved ones, her grandfather first and then her father a few months later. These losses and having to move from her family home taught her about life's fragility. She moved with her mother and sister to a house near the Carmel of Dijon. Elizabeth had been richly endowed with natural gifts which she accepted with the simplicity of a child. At eight years of age her mother enrolled her in the Conservatory of Dijon, probably to prepare her to become a future piano teacher. She loved music and at thirteen she won first prize. However, she always had her heart on Jesus.

Her first devotion was to the passion and thus her spirituality was Christocentric. She understood Jesus' love shown in his passion and death as well as in his Eucharistic presence. On her First Communion Day she exclaimed "I am not hungry; Jesus has fed me." When she visited Carmel that evening the prioress explained to her that "Elizabeth" means "House of God." This deeply impressed her and she felt very strongly that God dwelt within her.

At about age 17 Elizabeth was blessed with special graces of recollection, of listening to and understanding the word of God. She drew inspiration from Mary, the attentive Virgin, who listened to the Word and pondered it in her heart. Elizabeth gave great attention to even the smallest activities of daily life. These revealed to her God's presence and showed her how she should give herself at each moment to Love.

At age 19 Elizabeth received her first mystical grace of prayer. However, even after this she had to struggle with her temperament. She tells us: "Today I had the joy of offering my Jesus several sacrifices regarding my predominant fault, but how much they cost me! I recognize my weakness there. It seems to me that when I receive an unjust remark, I feel my blood boiling in my veins and my whole being resents it! But Jesus was with me. I heard his voice in the depths of my heart and then I was ready to endure everything for love of Him!"

Her mother had refused to give her permission to enter Carmel until she was 21. While waiting, she interiorized the cell of her heart. "May my life be a continual prayer, a long act of love. May nothing distract me from you, neither noise nor diversions. O my Master, I would so love to live with you in silence. But what I love above all is to do your will, and since you want me to still remain in the world, I submit with all my heart for love of You. I offer you the cell of my heart; may it be your little Bethamy. Come rest there; I love you so...I would like to console you..." Her thought of God at this time was God "Who is all Love."

Before she entered Carmel Elizabeth met Père Vallée, the Dominican Prior of Dijon, who encouraged her to believe in the God 'Who is all Love" and explained that not only Jesus but God--Father, Word and Holy Spirit--loved her very much. In Poem 54 in speaking of the Holy Spirit she refers to herself as the spouse of the Trinity.

Holy Spirit, Goodness, Supreme Beauty! You Whom I adore, O You Whom I love! Consume with Your divine flames This body and this heart and this soul! This spouse of the Trinity Who desires only Your Will!

In discussing her spirituality, Conrad DeMeester, O.C.D. notes four main charisms about Elizabeth after she entered Carmel. 12

- (1) Her constant recollection was impressive but it did not make her withdrawn; rather, the Sisters record that Elizabeth was simple, joyous, amiable and obliging. Her writings, words and actions were all one.
- (2) She was noted for her "enthusiastic and loving approach to the Trinity." It was a wonder to her that however immense and exalted God is, he is not only one but Three. The Three Persons dwell in us and want to be loved by us, to deify us and to give us life forever. She considered her vocation to consist in adoration and thanksgiving for this love of the Three, in wonderment of their beauty, and in the total gift of herself to whatever they desired of her. For Elizabeth the dynamics of God's love for us were like an ascending and descending double movement: The Father sends his Son among us; Jesus perpetuates his human work, love and presence in the church, principally through the Eucharist; they send the Spirit to us to manifest Jesus' life in our lives and through us to others. The Three dwell in us that our lives might be transfigured to one that is forgetful and freed of self for the good of others. Then the Spirit will sing ever more earnestly in our hearts "the praise of the God of Love." (Ephesians 1:12)
- (3) Elizabeth held scripture in great importance, and this was at a time when it was not known or read very much by Catholics. "She based her contemplation and her doctrine on the revealed word, made lifegiving by her contact with the Word of God."

 Just as the Holy Spirit proceeds invisibly into our souls through the gift of love, so does the Son through the gift of wisdom. In her "Prayer to the Trinity" Elizabeth prayed, "O Eternal Word, Word of my God, I want to spend my life in listening to you, to become wholly teachable that I may learn all from you." Fr. Garrigou Lagrange, O.P. states that under the impulse of the gift of wisdom, together with her exercise and growth in charity, everything took on a rhythm befitting one dedicated to the praise of glory. She translated into her daily living what she understood of the gospel message, so much so that it could be said that "The supreme witness of Elizabeth of the Trinity is her way of living."
- (4) Elizabeth made a great contribution to the spirituality of the laity, for she lived a deeply spiritual life for several years as a young lay woman before entering Carmel. She enlarged on the common riches of every Christian, religious or laity: God's great desire to be united with us, baptism which makes us his children, the reality of the indwelling presence, the joy this gives us and which makes us want to give ourselves to others, the Eucharist which nourishes us, and our eternal destiny.

Considering the text from Revelation 4:11--"Worthy are you to receive glory..." she asked herself how she could imitate in the heaven of her soul this unceasing occupation of the blessed in heaven. She found the answer in Ephesians 3:16-17: "to be rooted and grounded in love" was the condition for fulfilling worthily her work as praise of glory. For her this passage highlighted the Trinitarian dimension of transformation: the Father through the Spirit strengthens the soul inwardly so that Christ can dwell through faith and love in the heart.

Père Vallée, who was highly regarded by the Carmelites, frequently gave them lectures and retreats, thereby communicating to them "in a theological vocabulary full of a personal oratorical style, a spiritual and dogmatic richness." Elizabeth profited by all of this even though she never explained in her writings her understanding of Trinitarian theology nor presented any kind of a synthesis. She wrote and spoke out of a lived experience of the divine indwelling. Like St. Catherine of Siena she interiorized the cell of her heart, there to keep company with the Three.

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. declared that he was impressed by the high degree of the gifts of understanding and wisdom which Elizabeth possessed which enabled her to penetrate so deeply into the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. In a letter to a friend she declared "It seems to me that this name (Elizabeth of the Trinity) indicates a particular vocation. Isn't it beautiful! I so love this mystery of the Most Holy Trinity! It is an abyss in which I lose myself." In another letter she likewise stated "I am Elizabeth of the Trinity, that is to say, Elizabeth disappearing, losing herself, letting herself be completely possessed by the 'Three'."

She encouraged another friend thus: "Let us live with God as with a Friend. Let us make our faith a living thing, so as to remain in communion with Him through everything. We carry our heaven within us, since He Who completely satisfies every longing of the glorified souls, in the light of the Beatific Vision, is giving Himself to us in faith and mystery. It seems to me that I have found my heaven on earth, since heaven is God and God is in my soul."

Elizabeth always remained Christocentric even in her Trinitarian approach. She loved to listen to the Master. Her transformation in God came about through her conformity to Jesus, crucified and risen. Towards the end of her life Elizabeth pressed her profession crucifix to her heart exclaiming, "We have loved each other so much."

At 26 Elizabeth was confined to the infirmary with Addison's disease which, in her day, was a very painful, destructive and incurable disease.11 She experienced great fatigue and weakness to the point of feeling faint very frequently. A serious gastric ulcer which almost destroyed her stomach caused such acute suffering that she could hardly eat without sharp pain. She had constant headaches and sleepless nights. "During one of the periods of her most intense pain she wrote: `I am tasting, experiencing joys hitherto un-known: the joy of suffering...Before I die it is my dream to be transformed into Jesus crucified, and this is what gives me such fortitude in suffering." Again, "This is what I am going to teach myself: conformity, identity with my adored Master who was crucified for love! Then I shall be able to fulfill my office of Praise of Glory and even here below to sing the eternal Sanctus, while waiting to go and chant it in the heavenly courts of the Father's house." Because of acute internal inflammation "She was literally scorched and could speak only with difficulty; but her face was lit up with supreme joy: 'God is a consuming fire,' she said, 'and I am suffering His action.'" The torture of the burning thirst further conformed her to Jesus' great thirst on the cross.

In the midst of such great sufferings it is remarkable that within three months of her death Elizabeth wrote four of her major works: <u>Heaven in Faith</u>, meditations for a ten-day retreat; <u>The Greatness of our Vocation</u>, written to a young woman of 19 in Dijon; <u>Last Retreat</u> and <u>Let Yourself Be Loved</u>, for her prioress Mother Germaine.

Shortly before Elizabeth died she expressed in a letter what she thought her mission in heaven would be. "I think that in Heaven my mission will be to draw souls by helping them to go out of themselves in order to cling to God by a wholly simple and loving movement, and to keep them in this great silence within which will allow God to communicate Himself to them and to transform them into Himself." In another letter to a friend she wrote, "I leave you

my faith in the presence of God, of the God who is all Love dwelling in our souls. I confide to you: it is this intimacy with Him `within' which has been the beautiful sun illuminating my life, making it already an anticipated Heaven; it is what sustains me today in my suffering." Her last words before she died on November 9, 1906, after only five years in Carmel, were: "I am going to Light, to Life, to Love!"

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity's theology was simple. She said that her only devotional practice was to enter 'within' and to lose herself in the Three who were there. She understood that God is present to all his creation as creator but to those who are baptized he is present in a special way as Triune. The theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit given in baptism were very active in her life. As said previously the gift of wisdom was very pronounced as evidenced by her devotion to the mystery of the Trinity. Her one dominant thought was the glory of the Trinity. She gave great attention to growth in charity so that she could live through love in God's presence. This growth in charity increased her praise of the Trinity. As she lay dying she remarked to the Sisters, "In the evening of life all passes away. Only love remains."

St. Thomas teaches that union with God comes, not through special charisms, but by the theological virtues given in baptism, the greatest of which is love. Our destiny is to share in the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who come to dwell in us as the object of knowledge and love. Because Elizabeth strongly desired the full development of her baptism and "to live through love in God's presence," she was open to receive the abundant graces offered to her. Grace is necessary to transform human nature so that we can share in the communal life of the Trinity. The gifts of the Holy Spirit could operate freely in her and she allowed the Trinitarian life to develop.

In the <u>Summa</u> St. Thomas treats of the missions of the Trinity. The divine persons are sent, not only in order to be possessed, but also that they may be enjoyed. It is through grace that this power of enjoyment is ours. When grace is given the Holy Spirit himself is possessed and dwells in a person. The Holy Spirit is the source of the gift of grace. "The love of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us." (Romans 5:5b)

What a beautiful example Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity was of grace fully active in a soul! May she, who understood so well the meaning of baptism and was so mindful of the Triune Presence within her, intercede and obtain for us a greater living faith that will enable us to enter more deeply into our hearts and lose ourselves in the Three who are there—in praise of the God of Love.

NOTES

- 1. Hans Urs von Balthasar, <u>Elizabeth of Dijon and Her Spiritual</u>
 <u>Mission</u>, (Pantheon Books, NY, 1956) 35-36
- 2. Ibid, 37
- 3. The phrase is taken from <u>Elizabeth of the Trinity</u>, The Complete Works, Volume I, Edited by Conrad De Meester, O.C.D., Translated by Sister Aletheia Kane, O.C.D., (ICS Publications, 1984), 25
- 4. Unless otherwise noted the biographical information is taken from <u>Elizabeth of the Trinity</u>, The Complete Works, Biographical Sketch p. 7ff and the General Introduction p. 2lff.
- 5. <u>Light Love Life</u>, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edited by Conrad De Meester, O.C.D. and the Carmel of Dijon, Translated by Sr. Aletheia Kane, O.C.D. (ICS Publications, Washington, DC, 1987), 26
- 6. Ibid, 27
- 7. Ibid, 33
- 8. Elizabeth, 11
- 9. <u>Light Love Life</u>, 53
- 10. Elizabeth, Personal Note 5 quoted, 16
- 11. Ibid, Poem 54 quoted, 17
- 12. Ibid, 21-28
- 13. Ibid, 26
- 14. Lagrange is cited in <u>Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity</u>, M.M. Philipon, O.P. (The Newman Press, Westminster, MD, 1955), 187
- 15. Elizabeth, 27
- 16. Souvenirs #150, quoted in Elizabeth
- 17. Elizabeth, 70
- 18. The Spiritual Doctrine, Preface, xii

- 19. Letter to Canon A., June 14, 1901, as quoted in <u>The Spiritual</u> <u>Doctrine</u>, 49
- 20. Letter to G. de G., August 20, 1903, as quoted in <u>The Spiritual</u> <u>Doctrine</u>, 49
- 21. Ibid, 50
- 22. Souvenirs 246 as quoted in Elizabeth, 26
- 23. Light Love Life, 120
- 24. Letter to her mother as quoted by Luigi Borriello, O.C.D., <u>The Spiritual Doctrine of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity</u>, translated by Jordan Aumann, O.P., (Alba House, NY, 1986), 12
- 25. Letter to G. de Gemeaus, October, 1906. Cf. Romans 8:29, as quoted in <u>The Spiritual Doctrine of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity</u>, 12
- 26. Reminiscences of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, Translated by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey, (The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1952), 155
- 27. Letter #335 as quoted in Elizabeth, 28-29
- 28. Letter #333 to Antoinette de Bobel as quoted in Elizabeth, 30
- 29. Reminiscences, 168
- 30. Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, 186
- 31. Benedict Ashley, O.P., <u>Thomas Aguinas</u>, <u>The Gifts of the Spirit</u>, (New City Press, NY, 1995) 19, 51
- 32. <u>Summa Theologica</u>, Complete English Edition in Five Volumes, (Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1981), Ia, q.43, 219f

THE WORD OF GOD IN LCM Logos and Rhema

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Dominicans preach, live, study and pray the Word of God. The Book of the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers bears this true. Logos and rhema, addressed in their proper place, present an ambient for the nuns "to preach the name of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world". (LCM 1. II)¹ It is the special and unique contribution of the Nuns "to seek, ponder and call upon him in solitude so that the word proceeding from the mouth of God may not return to him empty, but may accomplish those things for which it was sent". (cf. Is 55:10) Through our contemplation of the Word of God, we witness to the world that: "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14)

Logos and rhema represent two ways the Greek language, and certainly the New Testament writers, express the concept of "word". The Greek rendering of logos and rhema, of course, are not given in LCM, but certainly these two forms of the concept of "word" are, and our approach to a deeper understanding of them in our monastic reflection can only broaden our vocation as preachers of the word. Each reference to the word in LCM holds depth.

Logos designates the eternal word. This logos, "word", is one that comes forth from a mental command. It is also applied to the person of Jesus in the New Testament who is the Eternal Word uttered by the Father. The logos in early Greek and Roman philosophy, and logos in Stoicism and Platonism designates a creative spirit in the universe, a lesser god, a demiurge. In the New Testament, particularly John's Gospel, the Logos is Jesus Christ whom God has sent. Anthony Gilles affirms: "John, on the other hand, makes it clear that the Logos is in no way of a lesser order of being than the Father himself: Theos en ho logos, 'God was the Word'." Jesus is more than an envoy; he is one substance with the Father.

Rhema, the Greek word also translated as "word" differs from logos. Rhema is the spoken word, the revealed, oral words which the Son of God speaks to humanity. Logos is equated with the person of the Son of God, while rhema is the spoken word of his mouth and the scriptures we read.

Constitution 96, rich in the concept of rhema, the recorded words of scripture, reminds us that "the brethren are commissioned entirely for spreading the word of God by preaching. The nuns, commissioned primarily for prayer, proclaim the Gospel of God by the example of their life: by listening to the word, by celebrating it, by keeping it in their hearts. (cf. Lk 2:18). Scripture, the word of God - rhema, is given specifically to the Dominican nun as a

special trust and sign of her charism in the Order.

The second part of LCM 96 delivers an astonishing statement: "The purpose of all regular observance, especially enclosure and silence, is that the word of God (rhema) may dwell in the monastery." Regular observance, enclosure and silence, these areas of our life that are so highly esteemed, are means, essential and necessary, but given that the cherished word of God abide with us. "Therefore, the nuns, after the example of the Precursor, should prepare the way of the Lord in the desert by the witness of their prayer and penance." (LCM 96. II) The prayer and singleness of heart, the penance and preparation for the Lord's coming is the Dominican nun's attitude as she hears, studies and keeps the Word of God.

Logos and rhema merge beautifully in LCM. The first article on Lectio Divina, number 97. II, expresses a clear-cut logos statement: "Christ is the Word of God". This point has paramount importance before we read the scriptures, rhema, because everything in them proclaims Christ. Our lectio and our liturgy are to be grounded in the word of God. "We hear him in the Sacred Scriptures; everything in them proclaims Christ."

LCM 99 alluding to the word of God, rhema, in Matthew's Gospel, so dear to Dominic's heart and contemplation, reads: "By shunning the cares and illusions of the world, the nuns allow the seed which is the word of God to grow in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit; in so receiving it they are interiorly renewed and more closely conformed to Christ." The word of God is a perpetual renewal program for the nuns. The depth of the word in our lives is the measure of Christ in our lives. "Ignorance of scripture", said Ambrose, "is ignorance of Christ."

This passage, which invites us to personal conversion, is of utmost importance because of its strong reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and because of the primary position of the word of God in our monastic existence. This also harkens to that great and pivotal event in salvation history when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would conceive and bear a son, Jesus. How would this be? "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow." (Lk 1:35) What happens to Mary by nature (and grace), happens to us by grace. Jesus, the Logos, the only begotten of the Father, becomes flesh in the womb of Virgin Mary. This mystery of the Incarnation is paramount in our Dominican spirituality, and is captured so well in John Wainwright's hymn:

Begotten of the Unbegotten One, And called by Him 'the well-beloved Son', In Whom He willed that all perfection dwell, In time we call Thy Name 'Emmanuel', Form of all beauty, in Thy face we see An image of the Father's Deity.³

Aloys Grillmeier, S.J. says: "The Christian is endowed with the whole, personal Logos; it dwells with him in the freedom of grace." This is strikingly true for Dominican nuns who are "instructed particularly in the Sacred Scriptures in which they can contemplate

the mystery of salvation". (LCM 101. II)

The Holy Spirit again reflects the Word of God to the nuns as is seen in LCM 3. I: "It is in the Spirit that we receive the Word from God the Father with one faith, contemplate him with one heart, and praise him with one voice." The Church of the Apostles did this, and in our common life, with all its multifarious turns, we too should be purposeful in our theological and spiritual reflections. Our contribution to the Dominican form of apostolic life demonstrates itself in the unity we maintain through the power of the Spirit and the Word of God.

The "Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns",1. IV, strongly and sweetly likens the sacrifice of praise of the nuns to the prayer of the Church in Jerusalem, that gathering of apostles and faithful. Then follows the excellent and exquisite line that links us with Mary and the Holy Spirit: "Persevering in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus, they ardently long for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, so that with unveiled face they may reflect the glory of the Lord and be transformed into his image from splendor to splendor by the Spirit of the Lord." (cf. Acts 2:42. cf. 2 Cor 3:18.) This occurs when we are filled with the utter fullness of sacred scripture, rhema, and the Eternal Word, the Logos, who is the imago of the Father, the imago of the invisible God.

- 1. Honoris III, 18 January 1221.
- 2. Anthonly E. Gilles, Living Words, (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1985), P. 92.
- 3. The Dominican Nuns, <u>The Summit Choirbook</u>, (Summit, NJ: Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, 1983), Number 451.
- 4. Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., <u>Christ in Christian Tradition: from the Apostolic age to Chalcedon, Vol. 1.</u>, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1964), P. 93.





and many are the graces that flow from this source, grace to praise goo, to comport our hearts, to brighten our path, to renew our strength and to edify and sanctify the faithful.



A FRUIT OF LECTIO AT OFFICE OF READINGS

Sr. Clara Marie Newark

TEXT: From June 10 -- Office of Readings
On the Love of Charity of Blessed John Dominic, O.P.

The Father and the Word, like the sun and its ray, produce the essential warmth, who is the Holy Spirit. Hence this divine sun is power, light and fire; one God and three persons. And this divine sun is all-powerful, all-enlightening and all-burning -- not three powers, but one power; not three lights, but one light; not three fires but one fire.

Blessed John Dominic, OP Feast – June 10

One Irresistible Fire

A Parable of the call to Contemplative Life

In the dark forest there lived a very curious people. They were happy in the darkness because they had wonderful phosphorescent funguses. The funguses gave off beautiful light. By their light the Forest Folk could work and study, live and raise their families. One phosphorescent fungus they called Theology, and another Philosophy, a third they called Science and a fourth Psychology (and there were many others). In their light the Folk learned much about God, the world, each other and themselves. So they were content.

However, on the edge of the darkness there shone another Light. This Light was a hope and consolation for some Folk but for others it was a distraction and an annoyance. Those who hoped said that it was a Living Light, a Fire (although they had never known a real fire), and some day they would all live forever in its warmth and light. For this they were willing to wait.

Some of their young were not content with waiting. They wanted more than the cold impersonal light of the funguses and they felt a strange attraction for the Light. The day came when two of them were studying about fire and could resist the attraction of the Light no longer. Sarah and Grace set off together on what they expected to be a long journey. But to their surprise after a little effort they found themselves very near to the beautiful glowing Source of the Light. In this Light all around was light. The Light was very much indeed like the fire about which they had read. Its warmth created in them a strange contentment filled with desire.

As their eyes grew accustomed to the light they saw that many people had come to live in the glow and warmth of the fire-like Light. These were joyful, peaceful and loving people. Many of them spent hours each day just gazing into the living Fire who was very loving, personal and irresistibly attractive. Afterward their faces would be radiant as if the Fire had entered into them.

Sarah and Grace began to sit by the Fire, too. Day by day their desire to be nearer the living Flame grew until they spent most of their time just basking in Its light and warmth. Each day they were drawn a little closer and the desire to be ever nearer just continued to increase. One day as they sat very near they were pondering a story that a Fire Dweller had told them. It seems that one holy man had said to another, "Abba, I keep silence, I fast, meditate and pray. I do all that I can in my small way to keep our rule of life. What more can I do?" The Abba extended his arms upward and flames shot from his finger tips as he said, "Why not be totally changed into Fire!"

Without warning Grace stood up. Crying, "Why not!", she leaped into the Fire. Sarah gasped and covered her face. She was afraid to look. But the attraction of the Fire was too great. She stared into the midst of the flames and there was Grace. At first smoke went up and ashes blew all around her as if something in her was burning away. Then she threw her arms up and danced with joy, beautiful and transparent, totally fire in the midst of the flames.

All at once Sarah understood; her heart yielded. Crying for joy she leaped into the flames. With a whirl of smoke and a shower of sparks the Fire grew brighter as if It too were rejoicing.

Note about phosphorescent funguses: The root word of phosphorescent in Greek means "light bearer." The Latin root word is Phosphorus, the proper name for the moming star. Jesus is the true Morning Star, the Light of Truth. All systems of thought, *phosphorescent funguses*, emit light in proportion to the truth which they contain. And any truth pursued with an open heart ultimately leads to the light of the one Truth.

Underground River

Drop by drop - waters carving out the rock, the rock that is me - the rock that is life - the rock - God.

Through the years
a tiny stream - born to be
an underground river and
through the rocks' darkness - Light to see.

Winding passage, patient pressure the waters gather - the river grows -Winning through - impervious rock, towards the One who speaketh.

Seeping, crawling, creeping my movement, my yearning grows onwards to that Ocean of Life that Life bestows.

Underground river, surging on through rocks never held by their hold underground - unconquered - I - a river - plow hold.

Contained - never constrained - cutting the fury, patient in impatient yearning, moving on into destiny.

The Light calls that sets my course that Presence - to enter it that Voice - to be immersed in it.

Underground river flowing free at last - fed by rock - by Mystery - those rocks yield and the river pulses fast.

Hidden in boliness, What means the strife? naught can stop the movement coursing on to Life.

Ab, underground river fill the depths, find the heights, know the Source - the pulsing, pounding, beating - drawing - God - my God - Source - destiny of an underground river.

INDIVIDUALISM

Sr. Susan Early, OP North Guilford

Almost always, when [St. Augustine] spoke of his hopes for monastic life, these words from Acts, "one heart and one soul," served as his motto. They also offer a solution for his original and ingenious explanation of the word monachus, "monk." For him, a "monk is not an individual person, living for himself alone, or one who is striving for his own personal perfection and sanctification;...he is no solitary whom the community is serving in some subordinate means." Rather, those men would be considered monks who through their harmonious living together have become, as it were, a monos, that is, a single being, and possess only one heart and soul toward God.

The mindset called the "subjective turn," or "turn to the subject," makes the communitarian ideal of St. Augustine expressed above impossible to achieve.

INTRODUCTION

The initial question that was the impetus for these reflections was raised during a community study of the <u>Rule of St. Augustine</u>. We know that for St. Augustine "community life is not blind uniformity, but requires the recognition of each person's nature and disposition." How do we in the twentieth century interpret or understand this emphasis on the individual? Another way of posing the question might be: have certain intellectual and philosophical developments over the centuries so formed us that we approach the <u>Rule</u> with a radically different understanding and thus misinterpret St. Augustine's emphasis on the individual, and providing for the individual's needs in community?

Selfishness and self-seeking are not modern phenomena. St Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning difficulties raised by individualistic tendencies in community (cf.1 Cor.12:4-6). In addition to St. Augustine, the earliest developers of monasticism, St. Basil and Pachomius, laid great stress on community life as an "antidote" to the self-seeking that was a hindrance to the total gift of self called for by the Gospel.

The attitude of mind that we have come to call the subjective turn, or turn to the subject, enshrines selfishness and strikes at the heart of any sense of community. From this attitude develops the individualism which is endemic in modern Western thought and culture. We all live in and are products of this atmosphere which was entirely unknown to St. Augustine, St. Dominic, and St. Thomas Aquinas. We in the United States, a country that is a product of the Enlightenment and proud of its "rugged individualism," are particularly influenced and formed by this thought.

This approach to life culminates in our culture in the need to feel good at all times (physically and emotionally), the desire for instant gratification, and the predominant consumerism and materialism so evident in our society. In an even more radical way it finds expression in the medical world where an individual can be kept alive for years on a life support system, while the human person is routinely aborted. There is irony here in that it is Christianity that teaches the true worth, dignity and respect due to the individual; and yet as individualism became more and more prevalent in our Western society, Christianity declined.

The next few pages will present the barest outline of the historical, philosophical developments that have led to the present situation.

THE SUBJECTIVE TURN: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The subjective turn is a product of philosophical thought which is a turn away from the outer world of objectivity to the inner world of consciousness.

A step in this direction was NOMINALISM, which became dominant around the fourteenth century, although it existed in antiquity. It is a doctrine according to which only individual things exist. In contrast to the teaching of a "realist" like Plato who taught that there are universal forms, or a universal reality behind dogs, tables, etc., the nominalist believed that we have agreed to call dogs, dogs, a convention conceived by the mind, without a universal concept "dogness" behind it. St. Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, taught a compromise between these two philosophical approaches to reality. We do not invent an order to the universe; there is an objective order out there, and in our knowing we find it.

The development of nominalism has been influential in subsequent thought because it raised questions about the order that philosophers had thought to be built into the universe. The nominalists believed that much of the way we ordered the world rests on our own choice, not on a natural and eternal design.

We turn now to the seventeenth century French philosopher, Rene DESCARTES, who is a major influence in modern philosophy, and the intellectual bridge from the Middle Ages to the modern world.

Descartes was trained in mathematics, and for him method was allimportant. To obtain truth or absolute certainty he thought that it was
necessary to doubt everything, and he proceeded by examining beliefs with a
skeptical attitude. Following this process of methodic doubt, Descartes
arrived at his famous conclusion: Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am).
For him, what has been established is the existence of a self as a thinking
being, as and insofar as it thinks; in other words not as a being possessing a
body, senses, etc. This leads to a dualism of mind and matter, and the
problem of the interaction between mind and body.

Our senses, Descartes thought, deceive us. For him, certitude is discovered within, not in objects themselves. Descartes denied that we

have immediate knowledge of external realities (the Cartesian "wall"). What can be known for certain if there is a wall or screen between the individual subject and what can be known? We turn in to establish the basis of knowledge (the turn to the subject). The thinking person (knowing subject) begins to be seen as conferring meaning on the external world: the human mind by itself is the grounds for certitude of our knowledge. This is a very different approach from St. Thomas Aquinas' classical theory of knowledge - based on Aristotle - which teaches that we know things precisely through our senses.

The eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel KANT completed the process of thought begun by Descartes. These two thinkers are largely responsible for what we have come to call modernity.

Kant was concerned with reconciling the world of determinism and the world of freedom, or, to put it another way, the scientific and the moral. Kant's hypothesis can be stated thus:

Even if all our knowledge begins with experience it does not necessarily follow that it all arises from experience. Kant suggests that man, the experiencing and knowing subject, is so constituted that he necessarily (because he is what he is) synthesizes the ultimately given data or impressions in certain ways. The subject, man, is not simply the passive recipient of impressions: he actively (and unconsciously) synthesizes the raw data, imposing on them the a priori forms and categories by which the world of our experience is built up. The world of experience is the result of an application of a priori forms and categories to what is given.

Thus, Kant in his work emphasized the active role of the intellect as conferring meaning; the human mind is meaning-conferring rather than meaning-receiving. The objects of the world come to us as if on a screen and the mind applies its structures to sort out what comes in. "This development goes so far as to seem to ascribe to the human mind in its construction and conferral of meaning what in classical thought had been credited to the divine mind or the angelic mind." This is a totally different approach from Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

A second major point in Kant's work that has had great influence in modern thought is the concept of the human person as autonomous, "free." For him, personal freedom and freedom of the will become all-important. He presents the principle of the categorical imperative, which sounds similar to the Golden Rule: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature".

Kant makes a distinction between the pure reason and the practical reason. Human beings are considered under two headings: as bodies acted upon by forces, and free persons who can choose of their own volition what the outcome of their lives will be. The concept of the autonomy of the morally legislated will means that the will, or practical reason, legislates, and man, considered as being subject to a diversity of desires and impulses, ought to obey.

Kant's thought is significant because it introduced the ideas that the mind imposes meaning on the raw data of experience, and the will is the supreme principle of morality. The result is that the human person is autonomous, with personal freedom becoming decisive.

Another aspect in the development of the subjective turn that needs to be mentioned is the work of the German Protestant liberal theologian, Friedrich SCHLEIERMACHER (1768-1834).

For Schleiermacher religion is an affair of the heart, rather than of the understanding, of faith rather than knowledge. What eventually becomes important in this line of thought is the experience, not the objective reality that the experience points to. Because he spoke about God in terms of human experience, this threatened to supplant Revelation with a human norm. His thought emphasized the interior experience or "feeling" of the believer with little concern for the objective reality of that experience, or for Revelation.

In the five hundred years of philosophical development sketched above we see nominalism questioning the order of the universe; Descartes producing his "wall" between the human mind and reality, and developing the notion of "consciousness"; Kant emphasizing the individual human mind's role in conferring meaning, and the autonomy of the will in making moral choices; Schleiermacher presenting the importance (for him) of experience or interior "feeling" in religion. These developments, along with cultural and historical forces such as the Renaissance, the scientific movement, the Romantic movement, and various wars, produced what is called modernity, with its emphasis on the individual subject and her interior consciousness and experiences.

THE SUBJECTIVE TURN AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

The turn to the subject strikes at the very heart of our life because of its effect on how we understand community life, obedience, and even our relationship to God. In a recent church document we read in a concise way how this move has affected religious life:

Today's insistence in culture on personal autonomy and on fulfillment, as understood by one's subjective conscience, creates difficulties affecting obedience, the acceptance of traditions, the objective limitations created by law, sacrifice and the mortification of one's own will for the sake of the broader common good. Frequently the very idea of solidarity is debased by the prevalence of an individualistic logic, thus presenting new problems threatening the meaning of obedience and leading to risks of individualism.

We know from the <u>Rule of St. Augustine</u> that community is a goal to be pursued for its own sake, not merely to serve some other end (cf. <u>Rule</u>, 1:2). The orientation to one's self forms the greatest obstacle to

the realization of the Gospel. In community a person no longer seeks her own interests, but she serves the interests of Jesus Christ: the Mystical Body.

Our attitude of life is one in which we wish to leave behind all self-seeking in order to find happiness in love for the other. In our lives of obedience, in loving service to the community, the Body of Christ, we are living out the Paschal Mystery. The turn to the subject, this particular type of inwardness, thwarts and hinders all these aspects of the life.

To put it in basic terms:

We will find it difficult to be free to go out to the other in community if our going inward (not in the sense of recollection) is more real and important to us. We will find it difficult to be free for a life of obedience if our conferring of meaning on an event or situation is not the same as a superior's conferring of meaning on the event. Indeed, the needs of our fluctuating interiority may put us at odds with living out the Paschal Mystery. Our need to feel good at all times and in all situations, which is so evident in the world (and even encouraged), could mean that we do not allow God's presence to fill our weakness.

We are created for happiness and union with the Triune God, to be free for God in all ways. Our daily choices are meant to bring us to this fulfillment and transform us. If our choices are based on contingent circumstances, emotion (what we "experience"), and the autonomous self, they are not free choices and will not bring us to our end.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

Our lives have been affected, indeed permeated, by the subjective turn of modernity. There are several responses:

Through study we can "name it and claim it" by coming to a fuller realization of what this philosophical attitude is, and how deeply it has shaped our lives. This is a fine example of how study, including philosophical study, can free us for God. Also, in our everyday encounters with a particular event, or as we are asked to do something, we might consider the <u>larger agenda</u> at issue in this situation beyond the meaning our inner world may be conferring. Lastly, and most importantly, let us <u>meditate</u> on the aim of our life, be clear about the goal, whether this be expressed as purity of heart, union with God, a life of holiness, or charity.

Every era is provided with its own challenges by which it may deepen and grow in its faith. As we seek to come to terms with individualism and all that it entails, let us recall St.Dominic's encounter with the Albigensian heresy, and be encouraged in our own particular struggle.

The message we receive from Scripture comes to us repeatedly: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." (Dt. 6:5) Jesus Christ tells us of the radical choice that must be made daily by each of us: a total commitment to him and the Gospel. The <u>Rule of St. Augustine</u> helps to live that total commitment in and through community.

NOTES

- Adolar Zumkeller, OSA, Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life (New York: Fordham Univ. Pr., 1986) 132.
- ² St. Augustine, <u>The Rule of St. Augustine</u>. Intro. and commentary by Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, OSA. Trans. by Raymond Canning, OSA (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984) 41.
- 3 "Nominalism," New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 10 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 483.
- ⁴ William C. Placher, <u>A History of Christian Theology</u>, an <u>Introduction</u> (Philadelphia: Westminster Pr., 1983), 164.
 - Placher, ibid., 162.
- "Descartes, Rene," <u>New Catholic Encyclopedia</u>, vol. 4 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 786.
- Augustine DiNoia, OP. "Modernity" Tape. Cycle I. Theological Formation Program. Washington, D.C., Dominican House of Studies, June 7, 1990.
- Frederick Copleston, SJ, <u>A History of Philosophy, From Descartes to Leibniz</u> (New York: Doubleday (Image Bks., 1985) 57-58.
 - DiNoia, op. cit.
- 1987) 162. Mathony E. Gilles, <u>The Evolution of Philosophy</u> (New York: Alba House, 1987) 162.
- 11 Frederick Copleston, SJ, <u>A History of Philosophy, From Wolff to Kant</u> (New York: Doubleday (Image Bks., 1985) 330.
 - 12 Copleston, ibid., 329.
- 13 Frederick Copleston, SJ, A History of Philosophy, From Fichte to Nietzsche (New York: Doubleday (Image Bks., 1985) 155.
- 14 "Friedrich Schleiermacher", New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 12 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 1136.
- Synod of Bishops Secretariat, "Consecrated Life's Role in the Church and the World". Origins vol. 24: no. 7. June 30, 1994. p.104.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

It is impossible to do justice to the work of major philosophers such as Descartes and Kant in a few paragraphs. For a solid historical background of philosophy see Frederick J. Copleston's <u>A History of Philosophy</u> published in several volumes by Doubleday. I was introduced to this work in the Theological Formation Program.

In addition, there are two recent articles that are not referred to in the paper that I found useful in understanding the effects of individualism in our lives:

W.A. Barry, SJ, "U.S. Culture and Contemporary Spirituality." Review for Religious, vol. 54, Jan./Feb., 1995. pp.6-21.

The author presents a succinct, clear analysis of the current cultural situation and how it is affecting religious life. There is a quote that I would like to include here because it sums up the problem:

The cultural climate which puts the individual before the community makes it difficult for us Americans to see ourselves as having embraced a community of brothers or sisters for the quality of whose religious life each one of us is responsible. Yet God, the perfect community of three Persons, creates this universe not for individual fulfillment alone but so that all people might be enticed into the community of the Trinity. In fact, I cannot achieve fulfillment without other people. One of the desperate needs of our country is the example of vibrant community life. (p.14).

The second article is:

Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Splendor of the Truth." The Thomist, vol.58, April, 1994. pp.171-195.

The author believes that the encyclical contributes to argumentative moral philosophy, and is also authoritative Christian teaching. (cf. p.172). He goes on to point out that in <u>Veritatis Splendor</u> we are presented not only with a reassertion of central truths, but also with a characterization of a number of types of contemporary error - philosophical, theological and moral. (cf. p.175). Because the author's discussion of current philosophical errors and the current moral situation is so rich it is not possible to quote from it, but I did find the presentation valuable for an understanding of the relation between philosophical trends and the moral climate.

At the Sign of the Pineapple Monastic Hospitality

5r. Mary Catharine of Jesus, OP Summit, New Jersey

Did you know that the pineapple is the symbol of hospitality? Go to St. Benedict Abbey in Still River, Massachusetts, and over the main entrance of the 17th century farmhouse you will see a carved pineapple. According to local historians, the pineapple as the symbol of hospitality harkens back to the 18th century when sea-faring merchants from Salem, Massachusetts returned from the West Indies often laden with exotic goods. The merchants "advertised" their commodities by displaying a pineapple on their doorposts, thereby inviting the townspeople into their houses to buy the products and to rejoice in their prosperity. Today, the pineapple is also the symbol of Newport, Rhode Island.

St. Benedict Abbey has taken on this symbol in a new way. Around 1940, seventeen years before the monks bought the farm, the owner, Eleanor Welch, purchased this front door from a home in Salem, Massachusetts. For over 50 years, hospitality has been the dominant note of the Abbey, and it came as a surprise to the monks when they learned the meaning of this symbol. According to Fr. Xavier, present prior of St. Benedict Abbey, the monks "christianized" this symbol taking it as their own. In fact, the pineapple has become a part of the abbatical shield. Thousands have experienced this hospitality, sharing in the life and prayer of the monks.

Be that as it may, hospitality is not the domain of Benedictines although Benedict specifically devotes an entire chapter to "Receiving Guests" in his Rule. Rather, it is a monastic virtue and, as such, it is an important aspect of the monastic way of life. As Dominicans, I believe we need to reflect on our specific way of practicing this significant virtue. The following thoughts are by no means exhaustive but I hope they may be a source of further reflection.

The scriptural motivation for hospitality is not scarce. From the Old Testament, one immediately recalls the event of the visit of the three "angels" to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18, 1-8), immortalized in the exquisite icon by Andrei Rublev. In the New Testament, there are numerous illustrations of Jesus at the homes of the pharisees and publicans and, also, at the homes of his friends—particularly, Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Many such texts are found in the monastic rules. "I was a stranger and you took me in" (Matt. 23:35). For Benedict, "to exercise hospitality is to receive Christ." "Because hospitality is an essential component of the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is also of monasticism."

In the Tradition

Our desert Fathers and Mothers were, however, quite contrary in the matter of receiving strangers and guests. For some, each visitor was Christ. For others, anyone who came knocking on their door was a distraction and a threat to their way of life:

One day Abba Macarius the Great came to Abba Anthony's dwelling on the mountain. When he knocked on the door, Anthony came out to him and said to him, 'Who are you?' He replied,'I am Macarius.' Then Anthony went inside and shut the door leaving him there. Later, seeing his patience, he opened the door and received Macarius with joy, saying to him, 'I have wanted to see you for a long time, having heard about you.' He rendered him all the duties of hospitality and made him rest for he was very tired...⁴

But such a thing was more of a personal idiosyncrasy, and the early monastic rules often gave detailed instructions as to how hospitality was to be exercised. The Rule of Macarius is worth noting for it states: "Pursuing hospitality (Rom 12:13) in all things, do not avert your eye and abandon a pauper empty-handed, lest by chance the Lord come to you in a guest or in a pauper and see you hesitating, and you be condemned; but show yourself hospitable to all and act in faith."

A brother went to see an anchorite and as he was leaving said to him, 'Forgive me, abba, for having taken you away from your rule.' But the other answered him,' My rule is to refresh you and send you away in peace'.

"My rule is to refresh you..." Hospitality is not simply social etiquette, that of entertaining visitors, but more the way the monastic meets Christ in the daily living of the life. By hospitality we invite our guests to listen to Christ within him, to provoke him to his own vocation, to listen to God and to answer Him. Ignatius of Antioch insisted on the presence of Christ in guests and praised hospitality as a sign of gratitude to Christ.

It is in the Rule of Benedict, however, that receiving guests and the manner in which this is to be carried out is prescribed in considerable detail. "I was a stranger and you took me in ," becomes for Benedict the touchstone and motive not just for the reception of other visiting monks and clergy but for all.

"Proper honour must be shown to all, especially to those who share our faith and to pilgrims." ⁷ No matter what the person's rank, he was to be honoured because this person was Christ! "You must prostrate yourselves before brothers who come to visit you, for it is not them but God you venerate. Have you seen your brother? says Scripture; you have seen the Lord your God." ⁸

The Rule than proceeds to delineate the ritual in receiving the guest. The welcoming of a guest is in three stages. First, the guests and the monks are to pray together "thus to be united in peace" (53.4). Then the kiss of peace is given. In these acts, the point of meeting becomes God and not the world. Third, since the word of God is our spiritual banquet, it is shared previous to the sharing of a meal and "every kindness is shown to him (the guest)"(53.9). In the whole service of hospitality, there is a constant reciprocity—the guest is seen as Christ and the guest is given Christ.

Separation and Reception

But yet, there is a tension between separation and reception of guests.

While Christ is to be adored because he is indeed welcome in them (53.7). still Benedict is careful to include safeguards that will maintain the cloister. Benedict insists that the spirit of Christ should be communicated to all whom the monastery welcomes and is concerned that the spirit of the world not be introduced into the monastery. Thus Benedict legislates for a guest kitchen apart from the community kitchen and that there be sufficient brothers to work there. There should also be adequate guest quarters assigned to the care of responsible monks, and the monks are not to speak to the guests without permission (53.16-24).

"In a monastery, the quality of hospitality depends on the vigor of separation." As we today reexamine our understanding and practice of enclosure, hospitality should not be seen as an antithesis to enclosure but a complement to it. In this way separation and hospitality are seen as "manifestations of the same love: following Christ and receiving Christ." 49 This is especially so for Dominicans who see separation not so much as a fugamundi--a flight from the world-- but more as touching its heart, its very center. True hospitality and separation are primarily, spiritual realities and, secondarily, physical ones. With this in mind, hospitality is exercised not merely in running a guest house or in the actual contact with visitors and quests but by every sister in the monastery by the fact that she is living in the community exercising this hospitality. Because of this, "the separation in question is not solely or chiefly a matter of physical remoteness and visible quaintness, of lonely places and distinctive dress, of odd practices and silence. These things are only signs and instruments of the essential separation, the renunciation of sin and conversion towards God."11

Dominican Aspects

In his Rule, Augustine makes no specific mention of hospitality and this should not surprise us, of course. In like manner, Dominican hospitality is anything but legislative. From the Rule of San Sisto until the rule of 1971, hospitality was only mentioned in terms of "warning" about frequenting the parlor and in egress or ingress. While at times monastic hospitality might have threatened the peace of the cloister during the Middle Ages, most monasteries and priories did build guest houses. "Even so, custom frowned on guests who outstayed their welcome. In days when hotel service was non-existent monastic guest houses were a temptation to weary travellers." Our 1987 constitutions however, acknowledges the role hospitality plays in our monastic life:

In the various dealings of the monastery with neighbors, guests and others, the nuns should manifest a charity which despite their hidden life, will form a bond of unity with them...But the whole community, united as it is in the love of the Lord, should become a radiant center of charity to all. 13

Parents, relatives, and friends of the nuns are to be treated with due respect and graciousness. 14

Dominicans cherish a living tradition handed on to each generation. Despite the sometimes turbulent relationship between the friars and the nuns in the history of the Order, the nuns especially recall with fondness the early days when Prouille was a home base for Dominic in his preaching and,

later on, for the friars.

"For Dominicans, preaching is the enfleshment of hospitality." Perhaps like no other monastic, the Dominican nun gives prime significance to the "hospitality of the heart". By the apostolic dimension of Dominican life, the nuns, in a special way, gather all people within their hearts crying out with Dominic, "O God, what will become of sinners!" The Dominican "heart is where poor sinners are received into the hospitality of God's mercy."

And because of this "hospitality of the heart", solitude is seen not as something distinct and apart but as a preparation for the preaching encounter of hospitality. Our time spent with other members of the Dominican Family takes on a deeper meaning also, as we not only listen and receive the preaching of our brethren who come, but we as "Sister Preacheresses"—our original title— "by [our] hidden life proclaim prophetically that in Christ alone is true happiness to be found, here by grace and afterward in glory." 17

Study also plays an intrinsic part in our exercise of hospitality. In solitude we become aware of God's mercy for his people, and in study we become aware of the needs of the world. Solitude is an entry into hospitality and as women and as contemplatives we become the vessels by which God pours out His hospitable love. On a practical level, study enables us to contribute informed answers to those who come to our door or call on the 'phone with questions or problems.

Practical Questions of Hospitality

Having said all this, we might, from time to time, examine our attitudes both personally and communally, in understanding hospitality. Are our guests interested in us, i.e. our way of living and witnessing? Are we interested in our guests or do they sometime seem to infringe on our already tight schedules? More importantly, do guests see Christ in us by the way we receive them? And above all, do we see Christ in them?

Examining the "tensions" in hospitality can also be of benefit. Are we truly aware that our monastic schedule often conflicts with that of the "world's"? Do we make an effort to personally invite guests to our Liturgy as part of their visit and, in that way, also share with them this prayer of the Church? On the other hand, are we so accommodating that we lose our necessary privacy for *lectio divina*, study and prayer? How do we view enclosure as a means of hospitality and are we cognizant of how others see it?

Mary, First Home of the Word

No matter what our monastic tradition is, it is Mary who can teach us how to be truly hospitable by teaching us how to receive her Son. No other creature was able to maintain such a balance between solitude and hospitality. The feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary focuses in a special way on Mary's "hospitality of the heart" and the Church prays on this day:

Father, you prepared the heart of the Virgin Mary to be a fitting home for your Holy Spirit.

By her prayers may we become a more worthy temple of your glory. 18

ENDNOTES

- 1. I am grateful to Fr. Xavier, OSB for his help in providing this explanation and to Abbot Gabriel, OSB, and all the monks of Saint Benedict Abbey for the many years I experienced their loving friendship and generous hospitality.
- 2. Adalbert de Vogue, <u>The Rule of Saint Benedict</u>, <u>A Doctrinal and Spiritual Commentary</u>, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983, p. 261.
- 3. Daniel Rees and Others, <u>Consider Your Call</u>, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1978, p. 345.
- 4.Benedicta Ward, SLG, trans., <u>The Sayings of the Desert Fathers</u>, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975, p. 108.
- 5. Carmela Vircillo Franklin and Others, trans., <u>Early Monastic Rules</u>, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982, p.47.
- 6. Benedicta Ward, SLG, <u>The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers</u>, Oxford: Fairacres Press, 1975, p. 42.
- 7. Timothy Fry, editor, <u>RB 1980</u>, <u>The Rule of St. Benedict</u>, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981, p.255 ff.
- 8.Benedicta Ward, SLG, <u>The Lives of the Desert Fathers</u>, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian publications, 1985, p. 42.
- 9.de Vogue, p. 264.
- 10. Ibid., p.262.
- 11. Ibid., p.264.
- 12. William A. Hinnebush, OP, <u>The History of the Dominican Order</u>, Vol.I.Store Island, NY: Alba House, 1966, p.136.
- 13. LCM 14.
- 14. Ibid., 13.
- 15. Fr. Thomas McGonigle, OP, <u>Solitude and Hospitality in Dominican Life</u>. Springfield, MA: General Meeting, June, 1982, (audio tape).

- 16. Ibid.
- 17. LCM, Fundamental Constitutions, V.
- 18. <u>Liturgy of the Hours</u>, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1975, p. 1446.



CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE, SAINT THOMAS

AND PASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT

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This paper attempts to address the subject of passive entertainment in light of our contemplative vocation. The first section will deal with the basic principles of the contemplative life according to the teachings of Saint Thomas; the second section will address passive entertainment, its demands and effects; and the third section will deal with the compatibility of the contemplative life and passive entertainment.

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Saint Thomas asks in question 179 of the second part of the Summa, whether the division of life into the active and contemplative life is acceptable. To this he replies: This division refers to human living, which is judged as it reflects intelligence. Now the intellect is divided into active and contemplative, because the goal of intellectual knowledge is either the knowledge of truth as such, which concerns the intellect as contemplative, or some external action, which engages intellect as practical or active. We can say then that the contemplative will strive to lift her thoughts and actions more and more to the level of a search for intellectual truth, whereas the active person will more naturally engage in a more active or practical action. Saint Thomas also shows that there is a constant inter-mixing and exchanging of the active and contemplative even though one or the other is predominant in a person's life (Q 179).

In the same reply to question 179 Thomas explains: If directed to the needs of the present life in accordance with right reason, all endeavors of human action belong to the active life, which looks to the necessities of the present through well-ordered activities. But if they minister to any excessive craving whatever, they belong to the life of pleasure, which is not contained in the active life. This is a most interesting distinction made by Thomas. Activity which is well-ordered and necessary is considered a complement to the contemplation. However if one were to seek to minister to or gratify excessive cravings we immediately move from the active life to the life of pleasure and thus

further from the ideal of the contemplative life as such. (#3 of the Reply to #179)

By its definition, then, the contemplative life will demand more intellectual activity and will thus require a finer tuning of one's intellectual activities.

In the reply to question 180, Saint Thomas states: Those are said to live the contemplative life who are chiefly intent on the contemplation of truth. But intention is an act of the will, as previously stated because it has to do with the end, which is the object of the will. Hence, as regards to the very essence of its activity the contemplative life belongs to the intellect, but as regards that which moves one to the exercise of that activity, (contemplation) it belongs to the will, which moves all the other faculties, and even the intellect, to their acts... We see then, that the will must be fully engaged in the activity of contemplation. The person who wishes to live the contemplative life must will to engage in those disciplines which will enable the intellect to pursue truth. In other words there is a certain amount of work involved in what we call contemplation. The will moves a person to look, to search, to pray, to ponder, to love. One acquires a habit, a discipline, when there is a repetitive movement of the will to search for the truth in the act of contemplation. Notice how Thomas repeatedly stresses that this act of contemplation is an act of the search for the truth. Contemplation is also properly an act of love. The search for truth may also be caused by the love of the object (God) and the search to know all one can about Him, thus to be more and more united to Him. In loving God we become more and more attuned to His will as well as being more deeply attracted to Him.

Our love of God, and the deepening thereof, draws us to that lovable and delightful good which is God Himself. Although the moral virtues are not an essential part of contemplation they do prepare for it and complete it. They do this by disciplining the mind and removing obstacles to contemplation: lack of interruption in the passions and external disturbances, both of which turn the mind to the senses. Only the will can discipline the natural inclinations of the body so that they can co-operate in this endeavor. In his reply to # 180 Saint Thomas states: The contemplative has a motive cause in the will and in this respect the love of God and neighbor is required for the contemplative life.

Man perceives truth in progressive steps, as Thomas explains, and the final activity is the contemplation of truth. Thus, we must use various means that will enable us, as human beings, to understand more clearly though as through a mirror (Saint Paul) that truth which we seek to contemplate, and must, therefore, distance ourselves from those things which would make the "truth" we seek to contemplate less clear to our intellects. Since contemplation is a simple or easy gaze on truth it follows that it is obviously not the investigation of a mind occupied in the search for truth (Richard of St. Victor De gratia contemplationis): meditation.

We say, therefore, that the infused and acquired virtues of the contemplative under the action of the gifts of the Holy Spirit directly influence the degree of contemplation that person enjoys.

2

In our modern society we observe the phenomenon of the mass media and mass communications. There are very few places which have not been affected by the values promoted in these mediums. It is well known that many today are concerned about the impact of passive entertainment on children. Most assuredly, there is a danger in letting children sit in front of televisions for the number of hours that they are accustomed to.

As Dominican Contemplatives, we certainly cannot expect to be unaffected by these phenomena in our world today. There is great cause for concern in the contemplative life, lest the passive entertainment presented today intrude into our contemplative life and values.

If one is to enjoy passive entertainment, one must be passive. One must open oneself up to the whole of that which is forthcoming. The absorption of the subject who partakes of passive entertainment is complete. The eyes, ears and senses are conditioned to be as receptive as possible until the mind is completely open to the message being given. This can be done through various stimuli, especially color and sounds. This is most noticeable in the way products are advertised today.

The result of this infusion of stimuli is a dulling of the senses and a craving for more and more. The stimulation given is of the most

superficial nature and is adjusted so as to reach the most fundamental level of a person's mind. It has been my observation that this need for passive entertainment grows and does not diminish with its use. Thus the more a person uses this kind of entertainment, the more the person wants it. If the will is dulled and finds joy in pleasures which are intended to stimulate the most ignoble of human tendencies the intellect will become lethargic and sluggish.

There is abundant documentation of these effects of passive entertainment on the mind. Among them are the following: reading skills have become so poor that there is widespread concern about the literacy abilities of young people who are accustomed to sitting in front of television sets; communication skills have diminished to the extent that many young people feel more comfortable dialoguing with a television or computer; the low grades and short attention spans of our youth reflect the tendency to respond only to basic stimuli such as those found in the media and media entertainment.

3

Saint Matthew states: Where your treasure is there is your heart. Does the need for media entertainment have an effect on our lives as Contemplatives? Does the need to have video machines available to those living the contemplative life present a contradiction to the life itself?

If we understand the meaning of Saint Thomas' teaching on contemplative life we will see that there is indeed an incompatibility between these two issues. In his response to question 180, 3, Saint Thomas makes this wonderful statement. He says: Beauty consists in a certain clarity and due proportion. He says it is rooted in Reason. Therefore, if our life, and a whole life it is, is to be contemplative, the light of reason must shine in our lives. To this end we are obliged to use those ascetical means our tradition as Christians and Dominicans have taught us. These means or ascetical values train the mind to have a more disciplined attitude. Our work and our life is not one that can be left to "chance." If we are to enjoy that contemplation to which we are called, reason tells us we should avoid those things which would make it more difficult to reach

our goal. We need to let reason set things in our life in proper perspective.

Contemplative life, says Saint Thomas, is an activity of reason. If our intellect is muddied by a dulled will, how can reason shed its light? One of the principal effects of an unhealthy use of the media is the shortening of the attention span. This would be a major problem for a person whose life requires periods of quiet study and prayer. It would also be a fundamental obstacle for a person who is required to discipline herself and to rise above the normal tendencies found in our human condition. Sometimes we do so for apparently unjustifiable reasons. God sometimes does write straight with crooked lines!

Contemplation requires of us the activity which will make that Truth which is God more clear and appealing to us. Contemplative life demands a total dedication. As Dominicans this dedication demands and requires study of the Scriptures and of Sacred Truths. If the reading skills are not encouraged and promoted in our life, how can we feed on the Scriptures? I do not think videos of the Scriptures or a heavy diet of video courses can take the place of personal study of the Scriptures. Again, with the stress in our life on the ability to interrelate and communicate on varying levels, especially at our community meetings, we must encourage more serious dialogue. We need to be able to express ourselves and above all we must be able to listen and understand our community. And as Dominicans our life is apostolic and will be profitable to the Order and the Church inasmuch as we prepare the ground, till it and fertilize it with the Word of God.

Quotations taken from St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae Questions 179-182 "Activity and Contemplation" Volume 46 Translated by Jordan Aumann O.P. Published by Mcgraw-Hill Book Company 1966

AQUINAS' THEOLOGY OF TRINITARIAN MISSION AND THE DIALOGUE OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

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This paper will present Catherine of Siena's trinitarian theology in the light of Aquinas' theology of the divine missions. Both Thomas and Catherine in their theological reflections treat of the salvific mystery of the trinitarian life as we participate in it through grace. To read these two great saints is again to realize the dynamic place trinitarian theology has in our christian life.

AQUINAS' THEOLOGY OF MISSION

The <u>Summa</u> demonstrates in an ordered and theological manner the great salvific reality of God's indwelling presence by grace. The Father's sending of the Son and Spirit into time, which Thomas calls the divine missions, takes place that we, in the Son and through the Spirit, may return to the Father and participate fully in the life of the triune God for all eternity. Thomas says that a mission is a procession in time. The Father sends the Son and Spirit into our hearts and the Father himself is present within us as the One who sends. Thomas writes that it is proper to the Son and Spirit to be sent because it belongs to each of these divine persons to be from another. It is proper to the Father to be the one who sends, since he is the eternal originate in the immanent life of the Trinity.

Salvation history mirrors forth God's inner being. The divine persons are present within the economy of salvation in their hypostatic distinctness. There is reference to a presence that is truly proper to the Son and the Spirit in virtue of their being sent into history. This is not merely an application of the principle of appropriation. Thomas writes that terms like 'sending' and 'giving' connote the concept of time. He goes on to say that 'being sent' and 'being given' are terms that are applied to God in time, whereas the words 'generation' and 'spiration' are terms referring only to eternity. The terms 'proceeding' and 'going forth' apply to both eternity and time.

Thomas writes of the visible mission of the Son and of the invisible missions of the Son and Spirit. The mission of any divine person occurs through sanctifying grace. The visible mission of the Son is the Incarnation. This is the unique sending of the Son of God into human flesh for our salvation. The Incarnation is a prolongation in the world of the eternal procession of the Son from the Father. This mystery is understood fully only when seen as ultimately trinitarian. The invisible missions of the Son and Spirit take place in connection

with growth in virtue or the increase of grace. Thomas quotes Augustine in saying that "whenever someone has knowledge or perception of the Son, then the Son is being sent." Thomas explains that, "proceeding as Love," the Spirit is the gift of holiness, and the Son, as principle of the Holy Spirit, is the author of our holiness. Thus Thomas says the Son's outward mission is as the author of holiness and the Spirit's inward mission is as the sign of its accomplishment. Of the Spirit Thomas writes: "the Holy Spirit proceeds temporally to make creatures holy."

The invisible mission of the Spirit is that of conforming us to the Incarnate Son, transforming us in love and consecrating us to the Father as first fruits of the Redemption. Through the Son and in the Spirit we enter into the cycle of the trinitarian life and return with the Son and Spirit to the Father. Thomas teaches that the Son's mission is distinct from the Holy Spirit's, "even as being begotten from proceeding." He goes on to say that enlightening of the mind is attributed to the Word and enkindling of the affections to the Spirit. The sending of the Son and Spirit to us means we take on the likeness of the divine persons. "By grace the soul takes on a God-like form." The likening of the soul to the Holy Spirit comes through the gift of charity because the Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and Son. The likening of the soul to the Son is an enlightenment, but as Thomas writes: "an enlightening that bursts forth in love." "13

The divine missions take place because of the indwelling of the Trinity by grace in the soul. The missions take place in order to make us holy and according to Thomas imply a new presence. Thomas explains the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul as God being present in a new way. This "new way" of presence is the sending of the Son and Spirit by grace within the soul for its sanctification. This sending does not imply a change in God, but a change in our relationship to the God who dwells within. "God is in everything by his essence, power and presence."16 The indwelling is a presence over and above God's presence as creator and sustainer of all creation. special presence where God is present in a personal manner as the "known in the knower and the loved in the lover."11 knowing and loving beings we are able to touch God himself by reason of God's indwelling presence. The Father, Son, and Spirit are present in us in a personal intersubjective relation through sanctifying grace which enables us to participate in the personal life of the Trinity. By participation in God's own nature through grace, the soul is able to relate to the uncreated Persons "as distinct subject-terms of its own knowing and Thomas says that though the two missions have grace as their common root, they are distinct in the effects of grace. We experience relation to each person as distinct yet the three are inseparable in the unity of the Godhead.

THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF THE DIALOGUE

In the <u>Dialogue</u> Catherine shares her graced experience of the divine indwelling in her soul, an experience which is both redemptive and transformative. As Catherine presents the work of the Trinity in the soul we see, as Thomas stated, that there is reference to a presence that is truly proper to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. In Catherine's writings we see very clearly both the Trinity as the source of our salvation and our participation in the triune indwelling as salvific and transformative. Catherine also writes of a particular relationship to each of the divine persons which corresponds to Aquinas' theology of the missions. The Father is the eternal originate, the One who sends the Son and the Spirit in order to heal and transform us. Catherine speaks of the Son as the Wisdom, the Way of return to the Father. In the Dialogue the Holy Spirit is presented as Love and Mercy and is sent by the Father and the Son to guide us on the way. Catherine presents her trinitarian theology in beautiful imagery. The style of the Summa and that of the Dialogue are of course quite different, yet there is a harmony and cohesiveness of doctrine between the trinitarian theology of Thomas and Catherine.

One of the pivotal images in the <u>Dialogue</u> is the image of the Incarnation as a bridge. The eternal Father says to Catherine: "I told you that I have made a bridge of the Word, my only-begotten Son, and such is the truth." The sending of the Son in the flesh has formed a bridge between our nature and the divine nature. Although the Son has returned to the Father the bridge remains, that we too may return to the Father through and in the guiding mercy of the Spirit. In the Dialogue the eternal Father speaks of the mission of the Son in the world in relation to the whole trinitarian life. The scriptural story of the prophet Elisha's raising of the dead child is used as an image of the Son's being sent into our human nature. ".. I sent the Word my only-begotten Son, who was prefigured in Elisha. laid himself out on this dead child by joining the divine nature with your human nature. Member for member he joined this divine nature with yours: My power, the wisdom of my Son, the mercy of the Holy Spirit--all of me, God, the abyss of the Trinity, laid upon and united with your human nature." The <u>Dialogue</u> makes specific reference to the salvific character of the trinitarian life when the eternal Father tells Catherine: "For I in my providence had joined my Godhead, the divine nature, with your human nature to make satisfaction for the sin that had been committed against me, infinite Goodness.. I, God your Father, the eternal Trinity..saw to it that humankind was reclothed when you lost the garment of innocence."23 In the imagery of the bridge Catherine speaks of the Father sending the Son and Holy Spirit into history to redeem and sanctify us and return us to the Father.

Catherine writes of the particular missions of the Son and Spirit. They are sent into our hearts anew according to their

proper relation within the immanent Trinity. The Father, Son and Spirit gift the soul in a personal relationship to themselves as divine Persons, in the unity of the triune life, through the divine indwelling by grace. Catherine writes that we are made in God's image and likeness so that we may share "all that you are, high eternal Trinity!"24 She finds herself enlightened in the abyss of the Trinity, God eternal. She says that we were given memory to hold the gifts of God and share in the Father's power. We were given understanding that we might share in the wisdom of the Son. We were given free will in order to love what we see and know of truth and so share in the mercy of the Spirit. union with the Trinity the soul "rises to a light acquired not by nature nor by her own practice of virtue but by the grace of my gentle Truth."26 To those who are united with God in love, the eternal Father tells Catherine, nothing will be hidden. God will be shown to them in the experience of the indwelling Trinity (cf. Jn 14:21, 23).

The eternal Father reveals to Catherine the unity that is the Godhead, as well as the interpersonal relations. The Father is one with the Son and the Spirit. "My power is not separate from his wisdom; nor is the heat, the fire of the Holy Spirit, separate from me the Father and from him the Son, and we are one and the same Sun. I am that sun, God eternal, whence proceed the Son and the Holy Spirit."

God created us as knowing and loving creatures. This gives us the capacity for God's self-communication. We relate to the uncreated Persons through our knowing and loving. The Dialogue speaks of the soul's union with God as a union in knowledge and love. Catherine echoes the thought of Thomas when she writes that love follows upon knowledge. She says that the virtuous soul dwells within herself in the cell of self-knowledge "in order to know better God's goodness to her, since upon knowledge follows love. And loving, she seeks to pursue truth and clothe herself in it." We receive the indwelling presence through our We receive the indwelling presence through our capacity of knowing and loving and it is by knowledge and love that we image God. The <u>Dialogue</u> frequently reiterates that our knowing and loving the Father, Son and Spirit transforms our knowledge and understanding and unites us deeply with the "going forth" and "return" of the Son to the Father in and through the Holy Spirit. Our faculties of knowing and loving are transformed by our relation to the Father's power, the Son's Wisdom and the Spirit's mercy. Speaking of the soul's union in love and knowledge with the Trinity the eternal Father tells Catherine: "If anyone should ask me what this soul is, I would say: She is another me, made so by the union of love." Earlier in the Dialogue the eternal Word speaks of the soul becoming like him through this union of love.

It is through participation in the divine life that we become like the Father, Son and Spirit in their life of knowledge and love. Our union with the triune God is attributed to the Holy Spirit as proper to the Third Person. The presence of the

Spirit means loving union with God because the Spirit is the personal love of the Father and Son. It is in the love of the Holy Spirit that we learn to love and are enabled to love perfectly. As said earlier, because the Holy Spirit is love the likening of the soul to the Holy Spirit comes through the gift of charity and therefore the mission of the Holy Spirit is accounted for by reason of charity. The eternal Father says to Catherine: "I gave her a share in this love, which is the Holy Spirit, within her will by making her will strong to endure suffering and to leave her house in my name to give birth to the virtues for her neighbors."31 When we attain to perfect love we are sent forth in love to our neighbor to share the divine love with others without ever leaving the presence of that love which dwells within us. In sharing in God's love we become virtuous. This is the reality that Catherine gave witness to by her life. It is in the Father's light that we have been given light; in the wisdom of the Son we have come to know the truth; and in the mercy of the Holy Spirit we have become love. Catherine in an ecstatic prayer to the Trinity expresses this reality: "You have gifted me with power from yourself, eternal Father, and my understanding with your wisdom -- such wisdom as is proper to your only-begotten Son; and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from you and from your Son, has given me a will so I am able to love." 34

Catherine, in her rich imagery, writes of the mission of the Son and Spirit as a service and of the eternal Father as the origin of this service (cf Jn 13). The Father is our bed and table, the Son our food and the Holy Spirit the waiter. We find rest in the Father through the teaching of the Son. We are nourished on the Word at the table of the Father who has sent us the Word, and it is the Spirit, the loving charity binding Father and Son who serves the gifts and graces given to us. "This gentle waiter carries to me their tender loving desires, and carries back to them the reward for their labors, the sweetness of my charity for their enjoyment and nourishment. So you see, I am their table, my Son is their food, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and from the Son, waits on them".

It is in Christ that we have been given entrance into the divine life. In Christ we have been incorporated as persons into the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This gift comes to us through the faith we receive in baptism. Catherine in her final prayer in the <u>Dialogue</u>, addressed to the Trinity, calls faith a light by which we gain the wisdom of the Son. It is by this light that we are able to walk in 'the way' with strength and perseverance: "Truly this light is a sea, for it nourishes the soul in you, peaceful sea, eternal Trinity." Then Catherine cries out: "O abyss! O eternal Godhead! O deep sea! What more could you have given me than the gift of your very self?" Echoing the experience of Moses in the presence of the burning bush and the words of the Letter to the Hebrews "our God is a consuming fire," Catherine declares of the Trinity: "You are a fire always burning but never consuming; you

are a fire consuming in your heat all the soul's selfish love; you are a fire lifting all chill and giving light." The eternal Trinity is a consuming fire, cleansing us of all impurity and uniting us in the love of the triune life for all eternity. The divine indwelling heals and saves and transforms us. In the rhythm of the divine perichoresis present in our hearts we enter into the salvific plan of God and begin through grace our participation in the life of the eternal relations in the immanent Trinity. "Clothe, clothe me with yourself, eternal Truth, so that I may run the course of this mortal life in true obedience and in the light of most holy faith. With that light I sense my soul once again becoming drunk! Thanks be to God." "

Thomas and Catherine were both mystics, on fire with love for God. For each their writings were an expression of that deep inner union that they had attained through the gift of God, with the divine Three. They wrote of the mysteries from the inside as those who had tasted and known the sweetness of God.

NOTES

- 1. Thomas Aquinas, <u>Summa Theologiae</u>, 61 vol. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw Hill, 1964-1981), Vol 7 (Ia. 33-43) T.C. O'Brien, O.P., "Father Son and Holy Ghost," 1976, Question 43. I also found William Hill's book, <u>The Three-Personed God</u> extremely helpful.
- 2. 43.3.
- 3. 43.8.
- 4. William J. Hill, <u>The Three-Personed God</u>, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 287.
- 5. Ibid, 292.
- 6. 43.2.
- 7. Ibid.
- 8. 43.6.
- 9. 43.5.
- 10. 43.7.
- 11. 43.3.
- 12. 43.5.
- 13. 43.5.
- 14. 43.2.

- 15. 43.5 Thomas writes: "a divine person's being sent to someone invisibly through grace means a new manner of presence as well as origin from another divine person." To say that a divine person is present in a new way in anyone or is possessed in time by anyone does not refer to change in the Divine Person but in the creature.
- 16. 43.3.
- 17. ibid.
- 18. Hill, 294.
- 19. 43.5.
- 20. Catherine of Siena <u>Catherine of Siena</u>: the <u>Dialogue</u>, tr Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (New York: Paulist Press; Western Classics, 1980), 58.
- 21. 68-69, Catherine writes that when Jesus ascended to the Father, the Father sent the Holy Spirit as the Teacher. "He came with my power and my Son's wisdom and his own mercy." 69.
- 22. 288-9.
- 23. Ibid, 278.
- 24. Ibid, 49.
- 25. Ibid.
- 26. Ibid, 181.
- 27. Ibid, 206.
- 28. Ibid, 25.
- 29. Ibid, 181.
- 30. Ibid, 26.
- 31. Ibid, 136-7.
- 32. Ibid, 136.
- 33. Ibid, 364.
- 34. Ibid, 365.
- 35. Ibid, 145-6.
- 36. Ibid, 365.
- 37. Ibid.
- 38. Ibid.

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY ART

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Why Try?

By the very nature of things our life is counter-cultural. The process of doing contemporary art, appreciating it or applying it to our surroundings is also counter to our monastic culture. Just as our life is incomprehensible to very many of our contemporaries because it adheres to values and practices that stem from an age long since abandoned by so many, viewed as incompatible with the forward march of the times, so too the modern look of contemporary art is, in large part, foreign to our tastes, our concepts, and outside the range of our participation. Should we leave it at that?

I don't think so. There is an increasing momentum of anticipation as we approach the year 2000 which is given added substance and impulse for us by the words of Pope John Paul II. It is as if the world, and especially the Church, wants to be at their best for that moment, ready and awake for the new directions that the Holy Spirit will use to put to rest the twentieth century and to inaugurate the next. Evangelization is the Pope's thrust: how to spread the Good News in the most effective, all embracing way, reaching and uniting all souls - ut unum sint. We, of course, want to be part of this which comes down to living our life as fully as we can. I believe that a part of that fullness is missing if we are closed to growing in an awareness of what is happening in the cultural world of our times, what are the overall patterns, and how we can, on the one hand, see the good that is offered and, on the other, resist what is alien to our monastic culture.

Historical Review

The Reach of Modern Art by Neville Weston concisely summarizes the history of art that resulted in the radical inroads of Modern Art. "The French Academy strictly governed the artist in France: a successful career could be followed only by a student who attended certain classes either at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts or in the studio of a recognized academician." (1) If he showed promise the artist would enter a large composition for the Prix de Rome. With luck he would then study in Rome and return to certain success exhibiting his work in the Salon. In 1863, 4000 works were rejected as a result of Impressionism which was already emerging and which was unacceptable to the Academy. Some of the artists of the rejected works, grumbling about the system whereby one teacher on the selection committee would agree to vote for another's student's work if the other did the same for him, hit upon the idea

of exhibiting the work that had been rejected. "They asked the Emperor's approval and got it and so was organized the Salon des Refuses. This single act signified more positively than any other in the nineteenth century the way things were to be for the next half century. These artists had shown disapproval of official standards; they questioned the unquestionable." (2) And they paid the price.

But who were these rebels and on what grounds did they base their revolt? The intricacies of this question do not belong to this essay; rather I would like to turn to the final chapter of Professor Etienne Gilson's work <u>Painting and Reality</u> to see the broad sweep of what these rebellious artists accomplished. Gilson extracts from art forms in general architecture as an example of a form in which the servitude of IMITATION is practically impossible. ("Imitation" is a key word, for the rebellion revolves around that concept). (3)

By contrast, turning now to visual art forms, Gilson points out that to imitate nature in reproducing the visual appearances of an existing being is <u>not</u> to have created a new being.

It is more important to create a being whose justification is in itself than to turn out endless clever images of such beings. If it is a true painting, a simple still life creates a new pattern of plastic forms well calculated to please the eye. Images add nothing to existing reality; artistic creations do increase the sum total of the objects whose reality is as certain as their intelligibility. (4)

Gilson proceeds to demonstrate that the curve of art development found its peak when painters such as Giotto and Cimabue produced a "felicitous blending of incipient imitation with a large proportion of the artistic creativity of Byzantine Art." (5)

Reduced to its simplest expression, the function of modern art has been to restore painting to its primative and true function, which is to continue through man the creative activity of nature. In doing so, modern painting has destroyed nothing and condemned nothing that belongs in any one of the legitimate activities of man; it has simply regained the clear awareness of its own nature and recovered its own place among the creative activities of man. (6)

In the essay entitled <u>The Dehumanization of Art</u> by Jose Ortega y Gasset, we find, at its nucleus, the same appraisal of the modern movement in art, though Ortega's overall emphasis is quite different:

All great periods of art have been careful not to let the work revolve about human contents [Gilson's "imitation"]. The imperative of unmitigated realism that dominated the artistic sensibility of the last century must be put down

as a freak in aesthetic evolution. It thus appears that the new inspiration, extravagant though it seems, is merely returning, at least in one point, to the royal road of art. (7)

Jacques Maritain looks upon the evolution in a similar way. The Middle Ages, he says, knew the correct order of art and beauty. Beauty belongs to the transcendental and metaphysical order and tends to draw the soul beyond the created. He notes that communication between men is only possible when it is through the medium of a transcendental. (8)

The fine arts tend to the beautiful -- they are like a horizon where matter and spirit meet. Like wisdom the fine arts are ordered to an object which transcends man and which is of value in itself and whose amplitude is limitless, for beauty, like being, is infinite. They are disinterested, their whole value is spiritual and their mode is contemplative.

The Middle Ages knew this kind of order. The Renaissance shattered it. After three centuries of infidelity, prodigal Art aspired to become the ultimate end of man, his Bread and his Wine, the consubstantial mirror of beatific Beauty... [I]t it is folly to seek in art the words of eternal life and the repose of the human heart; ...the artist, if he is not to shatter his art or his soul, must simply be, as artist, what art wants him to be - a good workman. (9)

In another place, speaking now of art and morality, Maritain attempts to place the different types of art in a sort of hierarchy:

from the human point of view of their properly civilizing value, or their degree of spirituality. One would thus descend from the beauty of Holy Scriptures and of the Liturgy, to that of the writings of the mystics, then to art properly so-called: the spiritual fullness of mediaeval arts, the rational harmony of Greek and classical art, the pathos-laden harmony of Shakespearean art... The imaginative and verbal richness of romanticism, the instinct of the heart, maintains in it, in spite of its deep-seated lack of balance and its intellectual indigence, the concept of art. With naturalism this concept disappears almost completely—only to reappear, as one might expect, cleansed and sharpened with new values. (10)

Our Response

The arc which these thinkers present to us of the evolution of art, arriving at its peak with Cimabue and Giotto, descending into the confusion of naturalistic imitation which all but despoiled art of its true character, rescued by the daring

enterprise of the modern masters who bring art back into the realm of making, as opposed to knowing -- this arc is a continuum. As contemporary makers and viewers of art, we need to be aware of this direction, to enter into it, to bring to it what little we can of what little we are: Christian Catholics with a glorious Dominican heritage to safeguard and propagate. We cannot sit back amd ignore the fact that this dramatic transition is happening before our eyes, that it has something to say to us, that it demands a response from us.

What response? It might be well to take our cue from the response demonstrated by Pope Paul VI in creating the Vatican Museum of Contemporary Art. This enterprise, he said in his address at the inauguration of the Museum,

grew out of the vexing question: is religious art the fruit of another era of the human spirit that is now outdated, or does it also belong to this modern age, in which the religious source seems to have lost so much of its marvelous inspirational power? ... Does there exist today, in the realm of our actual experience, a religious, present-day, modern art daughter of our times and twin sister of secular art — which still stimulates and delights the eye and spirit of the man of our century? (11)

In the process of researching answers to these questions, Pope Paul and those responsible for the establishment of the Museum, asked soul-searching questions of the Church, formerly the great "teacher and lover of art [and] a quardian of the past. Would the Church have only museums, jealous custodians of the work of ancient artists, only superb and magnificent cemeteries therefore, to offer for our admiration and imitation?" (12)

Next question: Even if space was to be given, in the noble surroundings of the official Church to the sons of our century's art, wouldn't the response be negative? We have traveled a long way, say those sons who are still virtual strangers to these privileged rooms; we have traveled far from the paths which alone seem to lead to these doors, far from the paths of classical perfection, paths where aesthetic beauty, intuitive dignity of forms, a clear thought - even if dramatic and romantic - are expressed. The paths leading to immediate understanding by others are no longer our paths, at least in a certain sense. Will we never again enter this kingdom of the Beautiful, the mere sight of which conquers; this kingdom of the True, which is blessed with attention only from the expert eye of faith; this kingdom of the Good, which only transcendent and universal motives can sustain? It was believed that the philosophy of art no longer has an effective lamp to lead us by. And so? (13)

Pope Paul VI concludes his dialogue between the Church, "custodian of this earthly garden of religious art" and its artist sons by pointing to the accomplished fact of the Museum. Yes, there is room for contemporary religious art alongside the ancient. And furthermore, the opening of the doors to the Museum is to emphasize "some fundamental rules of the Church's concept of religious art." (14)

First, that it is not "only some fixed criteria of the art of [the past that] have free and exclusive admittance." Second, that the Church does not judge:

contemporary art [to be] marked only by the imprint of madness, passionateness and purely cerebral arbitrary abstractionism. It is true that the modern artist is subjective; he seeks motives for his work more within himself than outside himself. But for this very reason he is often eminently human and highly appreciable...

... this art, which is born more from within than from without, is a document that not only interests us but obliges us to get to know it. What We mean is that it obliges us to read within the soul of the artist, or rather the contemporary soul, whose interpreter and sensitive mirror he becomes, whether he realizes it or not. Let Us say more: in this soul -- which is that of the spontaneously religious man (because we are all religious, on the metaphysical plane, to some extent), some extremely original voices may be heard, now with virginal candor, now with extraordinary vigor.

So We say openly that there still exists, even in this arid secularized world of ours, which is sometimes even spoilt by obscene and blaspheous profanations, a prodigious capacity (this is the marvel we are looking for!) for expressing -- beyond what is authentically human -- the religious, the divine, the Christian. (15)

Learning to See Art

I discovered in the essay before mentioned by Ortega y Gasset what I think might give a little entry into how art, in general, should be viewed:

We have here a very simple optical problem. To see a thing we must adjust our visual apparatus in a certain way. If the adjustment is inadequate the thing is seen indistinctly or not at all. Take a garden seen through a window. Looking at the garden we adjust our eyes in such a way that the ray of vision travels through the pane without delay and rests on the shrubs and flowers.

Since we are focusing on the garden and our ray of vision is directed toward it, we do not see the window but look clear through it. The purer the glass, the less we see it. But we can also deliberately disregard the garden and, withdrawing the ray of vision, detain it at the window. We then lose sight of the garden; what we still behold of it is a confused mass of color which appears pasted to the pane. Hence to see the garden and to see the windowpane are two incompatible operations which exclude one another because they require different adjustments.

Similarly a work of art vanishes from sight for a beholder who seeks in it nothing but the moving fate of John and Mary or Tristan and Isolde and adjusts his Tristan's sorrows are sorrows and can vision to this. evoke compassion only in so far as they are taken as But an object of art is artistic only in so far as it is not real. In order to enjoy Titian's portrait of Charles the Fifth on horseback we must forget that this is Charles the Fifth in person and see instead a portrait - that is, an image, a fiction. The portrayed person and his portrait are two entirely different things; we are interested in either one or the other. In the first case we "live" with Charles the Fifth, in the second we look at an object of art. (16)

Ortega's essay centers around his premise that since the Renaissance, and especially during the nineteenth century, the artist reduced the strictly aesthetic elements to a minimum and let the work consist almost entirely in a fiction of human realities. This error was a popular one: it is much easier and more natural to look through the window to the scene beyond or, in terms of looking at a painting, to identify with the content of the picture, than to concentrate on the windowpane or the surface of the painting to appraise and enjoy its aesthetic value. It seems to me that this analogy can help us to a new appreciation of art and of what the art of today is telling us. It should be noted, however, that Ortega is speaking of secular art. As Dominican religious we will no doubt be more concerned with specifically Christian art which cannot dismiss the view beyond the windowpane: i.e., the contents of the artwork. We will see later how Gilson and others distinguish between the two.

Ortega continues:

But not many people are capable of adjusting their perceptive apparatus to the pane and the transparency that is the work of art. Instead they look right through it and revel in the human reality with which the work deals. When they are invited to let go of this prey and to direct their attention to the work of art itself they will say that they cannot see such a thing, which indeed

they cannot, because it is all artistic transparency and without substance. (17)

Is art then to be appreciated only by an elite few? And once we learn to arrest our vision at the windowpane, what are we to look for? For us who are consecrated to Christ, what should be our vision?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it so beautifully:

The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the spiritaul joy and splendor of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos - which both the child and the scientist discover - "from the greatness and beauty of created things comes corresponding perception of their Creator," "for the author of beauty created them." (Wis 13:3,5)

[Wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. (Wis 7:256) For [wisdom] is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail. (Wis 7:29-30) I became enamored of her beauty. (Wis 8:2)

2501. Created "in the image of God," (Gen 1:26) man also expresses the truth of his relationship with God the Creator by the beauty of his artistic works. Indeed, art is a distinctively human form of expression; beyond the search for the necessities of life which is common to all living creatures, art is a freely given superabundance of the human being's inner riches. Arising from talent given by the Creator and from man's own effort, art is a form of practical wisdom, uniting knowledge and skill, (Cf. Wis 7:6-17) to give form to the truth of reality in

a language accessible to sight or hearing. To the extent that it is inspired by truth and love of beings, art bears a certain likeness to God's activity in what he has created. Like any other human activity, art is not an absolute end in itself, but is ordered to and ennobled by the ultimate end of man. (Cf. Pius XII, Musicae sacrae disciplina; Discourses of September 3 and December 15, 1950.)

What is Christian Art?

To review what we have seen thus far in our search for greater understanding of the place of contemporary art in our culture and our lives, we saw that Gilson, Maritain and Ortega all converge in saying that the positive merit of contemporary art is to restore art to its place in the practical intellect: to establish artists as makers instead of knowers, or as the Catechism says, to reestablish it as a "form of practical wisdom." We asked what then should be our response to contemporary art and it was suggested that Pope Paul's great confidence in modern art, exhibited in his creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art at the Vatican, should be a source of emulation; i.e. we should also be open to this great new direction and give it place alongside what is and always will be great art. Ortega comes to give us a clue as to how we are to view art (and make it) without falling into the naturalistic tendencies of the past two centuries which all but robbed art of its real essence.

What needs to be distinguished now is the not easily defined difference between secular and Christian art, and between religious and Christian art. We saw that Pope Paul, in placing modern religious art next to the ancient, confirmed not only that it still exists in our world, but that it is worthy of great attention because "it is documentary of the modern artist even more than of art; the artist is, in his fashion, the prophet and poet of contemporary man, of his outlook and of modern society." (18) These modern artists are striving to create the beauty of the truth of things. We can easily fit at least the best of their efforts into the Catechism's statement: "to the extent that it is inspired by truth and love of being, art bears a certain likeness to God's activity in what he has created. " (19) Certainly the contemporary effort is a striving inspired by truth and love of beings. But in seeking the truth of beings, it often produces startling creations, far from our traditional notions of beauty. The tension is placed precisely there. Nevertheless, Pope Paul envisioned a great flourishing of modern religious art. Maritain too saw the regermination of a truly Christian art being heralded in the individual effort of certain artists, some of whom are to be reckoned among the greatest, he said. "We must above all be careful not to disengage and isolate [Christian art] prematurely and by an academic effort, from the great movement of contemporary art." (20)

Gilson addresses the difference between religious and Christian art in a way that echoes the <u>Catechism</u>. "Things, Thomas Aquinas liked to say, imitate God in that they are and in that they are causes. Such are the painters, whose works add to the beauty of the world. Painters are the makers of new visual forms whose proper function is to make intelligibilty perceptible to human sight." (21) Professor Gilson goes on to say that this is the most solid ground there is for speaking of a religious art. "In a created universe whatever exists is religious because it imitates God in its operations as well as in its being." (22) As for <u>Christian</u> art, it has always held an esteemed place and important function in Christian worship and education:

[Its] proper end is inscribed in its very nature and...cannot possibly reach this end without resorting The subject here is of primary to imitational art. importance, and nothing is more legitimate in it than to artists would consider what most creative abomination: to rely upon the subject more than upon the art as a source of emotion. In religious imagery, this is not only legitimate; it is necessarily required by its very end. He to whom a bare wooden cross does not suffice is perhaps not so wholly Christian as he should be; he who sees in a crucifix the thing of beauty it may well be, but nothing else, is not a Christan at all. The art of doing Christian pictures does not exclude the possibility of doing Christian paintings; by itself, however, it necessarily is representational art. (23)

Maritain offers another angle to the consideration of the religious/Christian art question:

Religious art is not a thing that can be isolated from art itself, from the general movement of the art of an age: isolate it, and it grows corrupt, becomes a dead letter. But on the other hand the art of a period carries with it all the intellectual and spiritual stuff that constitutes the life of this period; and notwithstanding all the rare and superior qualities contemporary art may possess in the order of sensibility, quality and innovation, the spirituality it conveys is often quite mediocre and sometimes quite corrupt. (24)

The Christian artist, then, has the task of destroying bad aesthetic habits while restoring a good one. "In order to recover a truly living religious art, they must lift up, spiritualize, and bring to the feet of God all of modern art: no easy task. (25) Maritain explains that to this end Christian art must be legible and finished and that sacred art is in absolute dependence upon theological wisdom. This does not impose on it any aesthetic style or technique, but does communicate to it certain general directions. "The intrinsic characteristics of the object represented have assuredly for sacred art a very special

importance." (26) And finally, "a work of religious art must be religious. Otherwise it is not <u>beautiful</u>, since beauty presupposes essentially the entirety of all the requisite conditions." (27)

Speaking specifically of <u>sacred art</u>, the <u>Catechism</u> spells out what makes art to be "religious."

2502. Sacred art is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God — the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature," in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." (Heb. 1:3; Col 2:9) This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels, and saints. Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier.

"If you want to make a Christian work, then <u>be</u> Christian, and simply try to make a beautiful work, into which your heart will pass; do not try to 'make Christian.'" (28) "Art requires much calm, said Fra Angelico, and to paint the things of Christ one must live with Christ." (29)

Christianity does not make art <u>easy</u>. It deprives it of many facile means, it bars its course at many places, but in order to raise its level. At the same time that Christianity creates these salutary difficulties, it superelevates art from within, reveals to it a hidden beauty which is more delicious than light, and gives it what the artist has need of most - simplicty, the peace of awe and of love, the innocence which renders matter docile to men and fraternal. (30)

To summarize in my own words the above, I would say that the Dominican Nun, both as viewer and maker of art, should be focused, not so much on the de-masking and de-humanizing process of secular contemporary art (though it is well to be aware of that) as on all the beauty of the world, the pure and authentic reflections of this beauty seen in art and science and in the inner recesses of human hearts (even those in which religious belief is unknown.) All this should draw us closer to the Maker of all Beauty and be the subject matter for our making and viewing of art. Both Maritain and Gilson indicate that of necessity Christan art is representational: by definition it is imitational of Christian subjects. But they were writing at the beginning of the evolution of modern art, when art was slowly dislodging itself from its dependence on the representational and going towards pure abstraction which is the foremost characteristic of our period. Piet Mondrian wrote:

Actually, plastic art is manifested in two principal tendencies, the 'realistic' and the abstract: The first

is viewed as an expression of our aesthetic feelings evoked by the appearance of nature and life. The latter is an abstract expression of color, form and space by means of more abstract and often geometric forms or planes; it does not follow nature's aspect and its intention is to create a new reality. (31)

If the two philosophers were writing today, would they not have admitted to an abstract Christian art -- admitted that Christian subjects too can be stylized down to their essentials, or eliminated altogether to be replaced by an artist's depiction of the spirit hidden in the subject? Gilson says of artists: "They feel that there is still another reality hidden behind the appearances of nature and that it is their own function to discover it in order to express it, or rather, to express it in order to discover it; for, indeed, this metareality has to be made to be before being made to be known." (32)

The <u>Catechism</u>, it seems to me, is directing the Church to distinguish between what is real art and what is not, encompassing the new with the old, when it writes:

2503. For this reason bishops, personally or through delegates, should see to the promotion of sacred art, old and new, in all its forms and, with the same religious care, remove from the liturgy and from places of worship everything which is not in conformity with the truth of faith and the authentic beauty of sacred art.

Personal Conclusion

Allow me to stretch the already much tried patience of the reader one inch further to conclude these reflections with a personal note based on my experience as a Domincan Nun artist. am grateful that at certain infrequent times, those who know how to view art saw my paintings, sculptures and prints. By seeing my works through their eyes, so to speak, through their reactions, I gathered that there was a whole new road I was missing and needed to discover in order to make progress in my journey as art maker. The opportunity came in the form of an invitation to create four new paintings in an <u>abstract style</u>. To launch myself into this mysterious world of contemporary art, not wholly unknown to me and certainly not undesired by me, but little stimulated in my thirty years experience of monastic living -- a direction hardly expanded or developed since my years of formal education -- to "change gears" in this way, I knew I needed help. The second big opportunity came in the form of instruction which opened doors for me into this new world of making and viewing abstract art, whether representational or not, with eyes that did not totally subject the art to its contents but gave the art credit for having an entity all its own. Without having any signification, the very form created has a validity all its own. I have been gently prodded along in this process by another great opportunity: to participate in an exhibition which has as its end the very thing that I am pursuing. This exhibition is designed to advance viewers from a stylized but still representational art, through stages, to a purely abstract rendition of the same themes. It comprises my work of this past year -- work which is thanks to an initiative of Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P. -- and has allowed me to experience as artist what this essay has been trying to say contemporary art has done in our culture. It has enabled me to know the liberating force of non-representational art and how it opens up a deeper experience both for the artist and for the viewer of art. I confess that this is just a start, that I am at the beginning of the process, but even at this point I feel that my steps are more firmly planted in the truth of what art really is and can be progressively for all of us: a contemplative activity, an encounter with beauty leading deeper and deeper into the mystery of Beauty that is God's self.

NOTES

- 1. Neville Weston, <u>The Reach of Modern Art</u>, Harper & Row, New York, 1968, p. 18.
- 2. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 18, 19.
- 3. E. Gilson, <u>Painting and Reality</u>, Pantheon Books, 1955, p. 160. Delacroix on architecture says:

"It is itself the ideal, for everything in architecture is idealized by men. Even the straight line is man's invention; it exists nowhere in nature... Architecture, unlike sculpture and painting, takes nothing directly from nature, and here it resembles the art of music - unless it be claimed that just as music recalls the noises of the outside world, so architecture echoes the dens of animals, the caves of the forest. But this is never direct imitation as we understand the word when we speak of the two arts that copy the exact forms to be found in nature."

Remarks such as this artist's give full meaning to the tradition, mostly Greek in origin, that associated music with the birth of certain famous architectural masterpieces. In neither of these two arts is there any direct imitation of nature. To build a new dwelling is to create a new being; to write a piece of music is to create a new being.

4. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 283.

5. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 284-285.

"Up to Giotto, paintings continue to be, like human dwellings, so many products of the human power to add artifacts to the number of natural beings. Such artifacts are beings produced by nature through the agency of man, himself a product of nature."

"During the long episode that lasted from the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of nonrepresentational art, painters, instead of remaining firmly established on the ground of nature, progressively or regressively shifted over to the ground of imitation, representation, and, in short, exchanged making for knowing. Imitation, that is, representation of reality as it appears to be stands on the side of science or, to use a more modest word, Knowledge."

- 6. Ibid.
- 7. Jose Ortega y Gasset, <u>The Dehumanization of Art</u>, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1972, p. 25.
- 8. Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, trans. Joseph W. Evans, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1974, p.32.

 "Let one touch the good and Love, like the saints, the true, like an Aristotle, the beautiful, like a Dante or a Bach or a Giotto, then contact is made, souls communicate. Men are really united only by the spirit; light alone brings them together."
- 9. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 76, 77.
- 10. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 77.
- 11. Pope Paul VI, "Modern Religious Art," The Pope Speaks, Vol.
- 18, No. 2 (1973), pp. 141-2.
- 12. Ibid.
- 13. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 142-143.
- 14. <u>Ibid</u>. p. 143.
- 15. Ibid.
- 16. Ortega y Gasset, pp. 10-11.
- 17. <u>Ibid</u>. p. 11.
- 18. Paul VI, p. 144.
- 19. Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2501.

20. Maritain, p. 69. Maritain has an interesting note to that statement. He sees much of the boldest experiments of contemporary art dealing with characteristics of Primitive art but with an entirely different inner principle.

"What the majority of 'advanced' modern artists are seeking in the cold night of a calculating anarchy, the Primitives possessed without seeking, in the peace of interior order. Change the soul, the interior principle, imagine the light of faith and reason in place of the ex5speration of the senses (and sometimes even of stultitia and you have an art capable of high spiritual developments. In this sense, and although from other points of view it is diametrically opposed to Christianity, contemporary art is much closer to a Christian art than is academic art." (page 215 of the notes)

- 21. Gilson, p. 294.
- 22. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 295.
- 23. Ibid.
- 24. Maritain, p. 102.
- 25. Ibid., cf. 104-106.
- 26. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 106.
- 27. Ibid.
- 28. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 66.
- 29. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 67.
- 30. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 69.
- 31. Gilson, p. 284.
- 32. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 296.

Theology and Contemplation In the Dominican Tradition

Originally submitted as an essay for the Theological Study Program
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Is it legitimate and important for a cloistered Dominican to apply herself to theological study? After all, "knowledge puffs up." Then there is so much work to be done, the choral office to be carried out with devotion and preparation (and the office itself is a great source of doctrine), adoration is to be kept day and night, and our main purpose, as our rule states is to "live harmoniously in your house." All this is true. Yet Augustine goes on in that same line: "intent upon God." Our father Augustine was a man of theological study. For him faith ever sought understanding. His formula intellige ut credas, crede ut intelligas well sums up his view and practice of theological contemplation. The formula supposes a first insight into the faith and faith in turn lighting up the understanding. For Augustine the whole person, head and heart, is taken up in the contemplation of the Christian mystery. The resources of reason must be used, and the warmth of faith must transform an otherwise nominal understanding. Theology was an aid to prayer, and, like prayer, was to culminate in charity. It was a theology for life, not for the school.²

The Constitutions of the Nuns, Article II of Chapter III, number 100 treats of study:

- I. The methodical study of sacred truth, according to the capacity of the individual, is a fruitful preparation for <u>lectio divina</u> and an aid to human maturity.
- II. The blessed Dominic recommended some form of study to the first nuns as an authentic observance of the Order. It not only nourishes contemplation, but also removes the impediments which arise through ignorance and informs practical judgement. In this way it fosters the fulfillment of the evangelical counsels with a more enlightened fidelity and encourages unanimity of mind. By its very constancy and difficulty it constitutes a form of asceticism and aids mental equilibrium.

These two paragraphs clearly and strongly delineate not merely the legitimacy of study but its necessity, its purpose, its benefits, its recommendation by St. Dominic himself.

- A. Fruitful preparation for <u>lectio divina</u>: My <u>lectio</u> of the Scriptures will recognize the principles of virtue in the people who fill the stories of the evangelists, will discern the struggles, will identify the issues and appreciate the grace of creation, redemption, incarnation, church, the power of the Spirit.
- B. An aid in human maturity: Methodical, regular study will establish the truths of faith so that my personal false value systems will have less and less hold on me. Instead of being driven by impressions, emotions, and peers I come to be able to stand firm in my convictions of faith and goodness. I realize my own capacity and taste what real happiness is. Not to have or appear or dominate. But rather, to believe, hope, love and enjoy my God, and, becoming free in the knowledge of the truth, I need not fear to give myself away in service of others. This is the real maturity, the real Christian life of which Jesus spoke: "I come that you may have life to the full" (Jn 10:10).
- C. Nourishes contemplation: The study of sacred doctrine supplies the mind with truths of faith. Truth and falsehood cannot live together. Where truth enters, falsehood departs. Peace comes and love can flow out of a well-stored mind and heart that seeks in hope to rest in the God of Truth.

¹ Rule of St. Augustine, Ch. 1, #3.

New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIV, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., NY, 1967), History of Theology, p. 50.

- D. Removes the impediments which arise through ignorance and informs the practical judgement: Any person can be naturally afraid, biased, uncaring, unconcerned about what she does not know or understand. One cannot love what one does not know. Study should bring deepening knowledge, enrichment, challenges for more, warnings against mistaken attitudes or choices. Knowing the truth will guide us unto fuller truth. To make good judgements one needs wisdom.
- E. Fosters the fulfillment of the evangelical counsels with a more enlightened fidelity: The study of sacred doctrine will bring before one's mind the foundations of poverty, chastity and obedience; it shall teach what the counsels entail, what the response of my life should be in true faithfulness to Christ who asks the gift of myself to God in Christ, for his Church and who gives in return a gift that can never be compared to what is given. Study is always for life. Truth gives direction for the way.
- F. Encourages unanimity of mind. The Acts of the Apostles tell of the first followers of Jesus as "continuing steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles" (Acts 2:42). There were disturbances, but no going to war, no D Days. Does not every war tell us that some party feels that their "truth," their view is the only truth, the only view? Does not study tell us that one book cannot contain the whole truth? Diversity and difference, then, are to be expected and we can accept one another and a variety of insights. We can be one in God.
- G. Constitutes a form of asceticism: Anyone who has seriously applied herself to study, research, grappling with difficult reading matter, forming clear, concise concepts and conclusions, writing one's thoughts logically and keeping material in order of importance knows that all this is indeed an asceticism of utmost difficulty and value.
- H. Aids mental equilibrium: The discipline of study should issue in a mind that is not easily ruffled. It has labored. It has searched. It has tasted the strength of calming truth truth that will forever be a beacon in dark times, a rock for support in every storm, and a reservoir in times of plenty or of famine.

Our brother, St. Thomas Aquinas, was most optimistic about the study of sacred doctrine. He wrote his <u>Summa</u> as an aid to beginners, as an encouragement to recognize our sublime destiny, "an end beyond the grasp of reason," so that we would be inspired by that truth and "exert ourselves for it." "We also stand in need of being instructed by divine revelation even in religious matters the human reason is able to investigate" (1a.1).

Relationship between Theology and Contemplation

As a doctrinal backbone of this essay I quote at some length from Fr. Jordan Aumann's Appendix 4 of Volume 46 of the Blackfriar's <u>Summa</u>, using his synthesis of St. Thomas on theology as contemplation and wisdom:

Theology is at once speculative and practical.., yet theology is principally speculative rather than practical because it studies all truths in relation to God...

Man's knowledge is discursive.... This progression in knowledge begins with an <u>understanding</u> of the principles and terminates, after the reasoning process, in an <u>understanding</u> of the conclusions (Ia.79,8). The act of <u>understanding</u> is <u>contemplative</u> in <u>character</u>, for there the mind has come to rest in the possession of the truth (2a2ae. 180, 6 ad 2). The final and perfecting act of speculative knowledge is the contemplation of truth. For St. Thomas theology is wisdom, theology is therefore contemplative activity (Ia. I, 5 & 6).

....Taken in its most general sense contemplative activity includes the study of theology, but in order that the soul's gaze may be fixed on the contemplation of truth as such, the theological discursus must be terminated so that the soul can come to rest in the simple act of understanding (cf 2a2ae. 180, 6 ad 2).

Theology is eminently speculative and eminently practical but it is not inherently affective The perfection of theology would require charity as well as the Gift of Wisdom.

- A. The act of understanding is contemplative in character. What does it mean when I say "I understand"? It is a moment of mysterious meeting, is it not? The moment before I was in the dark about this. Then there is a light, a grace, an in-sight, a new awareness, a "laser beam" which cuts through a tissue of unknowing and at that new moment I am united to a truth, a something other than I knew before. "To understand is to become other."

 I pause (if I am wise) in joy and wonder, in awe and admiration. I "see" or "hear" after a fashion. I stand under the truth and glimpse its riches in me as part of me me becoming other.
- B. The theological discursus must be terminated so that the soul may come to rest. I may be a person who loves to read and think and enjoy ever more the abundant books available. Yes, always be a student, a learner. But learn to savor that truth. Pause to assimilate, to plow deep, to taste, to enjoy that new view of a new horizon. Food needs to be digested, stored for the body's building up. Allow the Truth to penetrate and re-penetrate every area of our being. "Nothing happens when I rest," I hear someone protesting. Rather, the truth is: everything happens when I lose myself in the truth. Rest in the Truth in God.

It can be an experience of exaltation - an insight into the Trinity or the universe - a glimpse of God's glory - of moving amongst the stars. I exult while forgetting myself or seeing myself loved. And it can be a dangerous time. A time when I see in a flash that I am a fraud, having sought myself all my life long, at my profession's expense. But all these times are a re-creation, a transformation. To really understand is to meet mystery again and again. That is humbling and exalting. That is God offering Himself.

C. The perfection of theology requires charity as well as the Gift of Wisdom. St. Thomas says that the human soul has a passive capacity (obediential potency) for the immediate awareness of God through contemplation; however, in order for this to be actualized, it needs grace and the supernatural faculties that flow from grace (cf Ia. I, I ad 2; 6 ad 3). Since we are created out of sheer love, will God refuse the love by which we love? Impossible. No, the gift is ours. We have only to choose it and desire more. The child instinctively knows that it must eat to live. Yet it must be taught to choose the good for its growth. The one who lives the virtues day by day has the furrows to contain the outpouring of living waters. We are co-partners with God. It is God first who has the desire, the charity, the wisdom, the Spirit of life. Life for life. Fr. Gillet, in his letter on Dominican Spirituality defines contemplation as "knowledge which has its beginning and end in love." Could I reverse the sentence and say "knowledge which has its beginning and end in love." Could I reverse the sentence and say "knowledge which has its beginning and end in love. Knowledge and love, understanding and devotion, labor and rest. They are two lungs, but the same organism.

There are different expressions of contemplation, but in this essay I refer to the contemplation inspired by knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and charity. In ancient times the word theology meant a manner of knowing and also a manner of praying. We do not think about or love nothing. We need truths, realities revealed in some way. This is revelation - our faith. Whatever be a person's faith, he will be drawn by it, be motivated by it, love it. Whether that person be an atheist, an agnostic, a Hindu, a Christian, that person is following something he thinks true.

Jordan Aumann, O.P., op. cit., (Eyre & Spottiswoode Limited, Great Britain, 1966), Appendix 4. pp. 110 - 112. Underlining mine. Fr. Aumann's Appendix 3 and 4 deserve careful study.

⁴ A.D. Sertillanges, O.P., <u>The Intellectual Life</u>, (The Newman Press, Westminster Maryland, 1956), trans. by Mary Ryan, M.A., p. 98. Underlining mine.

⁵ Fr. Martin Stanislaus Gillet, O.P., op. cit., April 30, 1945, p.16. (Rosary Press, Somerset, OH).

Fr. Simon Tugwell recognized, in characteristically trenchant terms, that "our task is quite crucial if spirituality is to be more than just 'zeal without knowledge.' The readiness to be taught by God means using, not evading our minds." In his book The Intellectual Life, quoted earlier, Fr. Sertillanges, has some remarkably profound and enthusiastic observations on the spirit, conditions, methods of the intellectual life. He reminds us that study has been called a prayer to truth. Recalling that the Gospel commends that our prayer should never cease (Lk. 18:1), so why should not study last all the time, as a desire and an invocation of the True? What defines our intelligence as a vital force, he queries, but the desire of knowledge? (op. cit., cf. pp. 57 & 58). Did not Jesus declare "I am the Truth" (Jn 14:6)? Through study do we not make our home in the truth?

One final quotation from Fr. Sertillanges should help to summarize the entire essay:

For St. Thomas, ecstasy is the child of love; it carries you out of yourself, towards the object of your dreams. To love truth ardently enough to concentrate on it and so be transported into the universal, into what is, into the heart of abiding truths, is the attitude of contemplation and of fruitful production (op. cit. p. 99).

Our pursuit as Dominicans includes the study, contemplation (and perhaps the ecstasy) offering itself in the revelation of God, set forth in the Sacred Scriptures, expounded in sacred doctrine; a revelation taught and witnessed to by the countless holy persons who have pondered and lived in faith, hope and charity; a revelation of relationship with this God revealed in history, unrevealed as no-Thing in unfathomable mystery inviting us - "Come to Me."

⁶ Simon Tugwell, O.P., <u>Scholarship</u>, <u>Sanctity and Spirituality</u>, from <u>Communio</u>, Spring, 1984, cf. pp.58 & 59.

WORDS FROM MOUNT ATHOS Jean-Yves Leloup, O.P. (La Vie Spirituelle, Mars-Avril 1979)

Tr. Sister Maria of the Cross, O.P. Summit, New Jersey

ON THE SPIRITUAL FATHER and OBEDIENCE

You can't look into your own eyes; to know yourself, you need another's glance. No one is a good judge in his own case. A spiritual father is a mirror which God is pleased to give us so that we can know our own self; a mirror whose word is sometimes harsh, but only so that seeing our sins we may desire to discover our true face. The day you discover it, your mirror will be silent and together you will reflect the same Sun.

Without the help of others, it is very difficult to bring to our life the necessary discernments. Discernment of spirits is a charism that is generally accorded only to those whose heart is profoundly at peace.

It is difficult today to find a man of peace, someone who is not tormented either by ambition or desire for power, but is solicitous only for the salvation of those entrusted to him. He exists, though: look for him. And if you find that man to be understanding and yet demanding, tell yourself that this is a father whom God is giving you for your soul's divinization.

One who wants to do his own will is misguided. It is practically impossible for one who hasn't a purified heart to follow the Holy Spirit's inspirations. Look for someone who will help you to discern God's will in everything.

The important thing in your relations with your spiritual father is that you should be able to open your heart to him and not hide any of your thoughts from him; this is the price at which you will obtain deliverance. But woe to that man if he proceeds to betray your trust and reveal your secrets.

God is the only Father; it is by way of grace that God allows certain people to share in His Fatherhood. The spiritual father is God's co-worker; he works with the Spirit: he loves, struggles and suffers with Him so that the new man may be brought to birth in you. You are not his own son or his disciple, but the son of Him Who alone is good and the disciple of Him Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The greater the spiritual father's self-effacement, the greater is his humility--and the more Christ will be able to increase in you. "He must increase and I must decrease"--such is the rule of every spiritual father.

Today there are few spiritual fathers who can be our models in everything. There's an old monk who used to give us this advice: "Be like the bee that gathers pollen from all kinds of flowers; it takes from each one the pollen it needs to make its honey. Go to your fathers or to your brothers—because we're all brothers—and learn gentleness from one, strength from another, understanding from that one, humility from some other still, and make your honey from all these virtues."

Saint Paul told his spiritual children and his disciples, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Don't imitate your spiritual father except insofar as he imitates Christ.

It's a great blessing to meet along your way a man who will help you to even out the Lord's paths: to lower what is exalted in you and to fill up what is pressed down. You will be delivered from the two most terrible demons: pride and despair. Thank God if you meet someone who truly cares for your soul. Open your heart to him and entrust yourself to his prayers.

An evil thought brought into the light loses all its venom. Don't hide any of your thoughts from your spiritual father, and there will be no more darkness in you.

Discernment is acquired only by humility; and you begin to be humble by putting yourself under the judgment of another in everything.

The thing that prevents us from being united with God is our own will. The way of obedience is the shortest way to union: it removes the principal obstacle to divinization, trust in ourselves.

A spiritual father doesn't need extraordinary charisms, but he does need infinite patience and infinite love; it is in this that he resembles God.

In the spiritual father's heart, sorrow and joy are always closely intermingled: the pain of childbirth (patience, exhortation, pardon); joy too, in seeing a child born in God, and in seeing him grow up to man's full stature in Christ.

Disobedience takes us away from God; we return to Him through obedience. To become obedient is to be divinized in the image of Christ, Who became obedient even unto death.

Remind yourself often that your spiritual father's only concern is your salvation and divinization. That's the reason he prays to the Father in secret. That's the reason he exhorts you, reproves you, corrects you. When he humiliates you, give thanks to God; this is the way he hopes to make you conformable to Christ and enable you

to acquire humility, without which you can have no share in the Holy Spirit.

At times, a spiritual father can ask a disciple to do something absurd; for example, to water some bricks so that they'll bloom. This is to help the disciple to bypass the stage of mere sensible reasoning, and make him penetrate through humility far into the light of God which is beyond intelligibility.

Spiritual masters are rare; rarer still are true disciples. Where can you find a humble man, a man who doesn't do his own will but the Will of Him Who sent him?

God is not a principle, an abstract law, an order to be deciphered. He is a Person. Likewise, it isn't a law or rule that we must obey, but a person. In our monasteries we don't obey a particular rule; we obey our hegumen. Obedience is situated within a relationship; and the more one loves, the easier it is to obey the one who commands—it is even our greatest joy. One who loves God has no trouble at all fulfilling God's law; he surges forward joyfully in the way of His commandments.

The Pharisees thought only of the letter of the commandments and forgot to love the One Who wanted their love more than their sacrifices. The one who loves his hegumen with fear and respect will find much sweetness in accomplishing what he asks, and will be freed from every care.

The spiritual father, more than the rule, is the medium God gave us to enable us to know His will. But the one who received this gift, and the charge of spiritual fatherhood, must not forget to be a gospel incarnate. If he lacks a single jot, God will take account of it on Judgment Day and will hold him responsible for the souls of those who were entrusted to him.

There are many who are loud in praise of their spiritual father's holiness, but who assiduously refrain from imitating it. There are many who endlessly repeat their spiritual father's words, but who carefully avoid putting them into practice. They are like apes: they mar their father's comeliness by their grimaces.

There are two dangers inherent in relations with a spiritual father: idolatry and murmuring. He's only a man and not God, but he's a man God is giving you for your sanctification. If you murmur against him--or worse, if you judge him--how can you hope to be saved?

There are those who change their spiritual father often, so they can have the pleasure of telling their story anew and so that they won't have to obey in depth. Don't wear out your spiritual father with vain words; don't tell him your past or your projects for the future. Tell him the state of your soul now, because it's now that

he wants you to be saved; it's now that you have to receive the grace of forgiveness and the strength of the Spirit. If you talk to him about what is past or about what hasn't happened yet, where is the present moment in which he can deposit God's gift?

If you are not humble, you will never know the sweetness of obedience; you'll say, "Why do this rather than that?" and you'll be disturbed. One who obeys is in peace, whatever he does.

If an assignment seems too burdensome for you, talk it over with the hegumen, but don't rely on your own initiative. Our fathers were intransigent on that. One who wants to be a monk must absolutely not have any self-will in anything whatsoever. Freedom must be cured of all vanity and resemble the freedom of Christ, Who never did His own will but only the will of His Father. His obedience and His cross are the epiphany of His love for the Father. May your obedience and your renunciation in everything be the epiphany of your love for the Father, the manifestation of your divine sonship formerly lost and now regained.

Don't obey by halves: your heart would be torn to shreds. Have confidence, give yourself totally. God cannot remain untouched by confidence and humility. He will make you overflow with joy in the midst of tribulations.

If your hegumen is absent and no one in the monastery is assigned to give orders, be obedient to everyone, considering each one superior to yourself. Think of the One Who became the slave of all, and Who came into the world not be served but to serve. Be the image of the divine Servant; seek the last places. "The one who exalts himself will be humbled, the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Bow before your brother's will, and you will find the freedom of the children of God.

Without the Holy Spirit we find no joy in obedience; thus, we must beg Him unceasingly to give us His love so that filial obedience may be re-established in us.

Eve fell because she doubted the goodness of God's commandment. When you are asked to do something, tell yourself that it's for your good, your salvation—and do your duty with peace and love.

ON SILENCE

How can your speech be good while you are evil? For it is from the fulness of the heart that the mouth speaks. The good man brings out good things from his good treasure, and the evil man pulls evil things out of his evil treasure. And I tell you this, that for every unfounded word men utter they shall be called to account on Judgment Day. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mt. 12:34-37)

This warning from the Savior has often closed my mouth; it has made me flee anything that resembles gossiping and slander. When I am asked to speak, I beg God to give me a pure heart so that the Holy Spirit can borrow my mouth.

The hesychast is a silent man, and it is only silent love that speaks well about God. Silence is a condition for praying well; it's also the fruit of prayer. The more you pray, the more silence is wrought in you.

Our spiritual fathers were great men of silence. Otherwise, how would they be able to listen to us when we tell them our misery? Our spiritual father's silence is the silence of God: it is His ear listening to us.

There are deathly silences, there are shameful silences. As for us, "We believed and that is why we speak." The hesychast's silence draws its value only from the love that dwells within it. "To speak for God is good; to be silent for God is also good." Very few have tasted the genuine silence without which there is no union with God. The one who has tasted it seeks it again unceasingly. God knows how idle words and the spirit's ramblings exile us from His presence.

There are those who observe silence of the lips; but what good is it, if they let themselves go in their imagination and if they condemn their brothers in their heart? By contrast, there are those who talk from morning till night but keep their heart in silence before God. They speak to be useful to their neighbor. Love and renunciation of their self-will keep them in peace.

If you're looking for silence, don't make long speeches about its beauty and usefulness. There's no need to set out for the desert; just keep quiet.

If you cut out every idle word, every judgment about your brothers and don't talk about what you don't know, you'll be a silent man very quickly.

If a man errs not in speech, the same is a perfect man, says Saint James. He also shows what difficulty we have controlling our tongue. "It is a restless plague, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men made in God's image."

The monk must not only silence his tongue, he must also keep his spirit silent; that is, he must not judge. Then peace will reach even his bodily members, and he will know a still loftier silence which will not be the mere absence of words, thoughts and judgments: it will be the presence of God.

All the monastic observances lead the monk into a deeper silence:

silence of the lips, silence of the spirit, silence of the heart. Each of these silences demands a particular mastery. Silence of the lips depends on control of our will; silence of the spirit depends on our attention during prayer; silence of the heart is a gift of grace.

Mary was a being of silence; in her the Word was made flesh. If you want Christ to live in you, seek His resting-place; in other words, keep yourself in silence.

The Word came forth from silence and has returned to silence. If we speak, and if our word really comes from the silence of God, then we will lead men to this same silence.

Some people understood Jesus' words; very few understood His silence. Listen. Preserve silence and silence will keep you close to God.

The monk doesn't love solitude and silence for themselves, but for the sake of God Whom he finds there. Chatterers won't inherit the kingdom of God: how could they hear the call of the One Who wants to lead them into the desert and speak to their heart in silence?

Diadokos of Photike has a beautiful image showing us how the observance of silence is an important work that leads us to union with God. "If you open the door of a bath," he says, "it soon loses its heat. So too, when a soul is fond of talking, even if she says only good things, she soon dissipates her memory and loses the remembrance of God: it evaporates abroad through that door whence so many discourses emanate." Silence is the father of all good thoughts.

Before speaking, Jesus was silent for thirty years; and when He speaks to us He says only short words. With Him you don't find any speeches, and He doesn't expound any philosophical system. His word comes out of silence and is inspired by love; thus all His words are words of salvation.

These days they need to teach preachers to be quiet before sending them out to preach; that would keep them from being clanging cymbals. Being quiet is the beginning of mindfulness. Silent persons are very mindful people--that's how they never stray far from God.

Don't be eager to speak to others under the pretext of edifying them with fine words. Remember Abba Pambo: they asked him to say a word to the Patriarch of Alexandria for his spiritual profit, and the elder replied, "If he doesn't reap profit from my silence, neither will he reap any from my speech."

A general rule for the monk is not to emerge from silence unless

ordered to, or unless the word is within him like a fire that cannot be contained. Of course, he has to discern whether this fire is the one that urged Jeremiah to prophesy, or the fire of the passions and intemperance.

Don't let your silence be an obstacle to charity towards the neighbor. Have some discernment: show him a cheerful face, be a kind word. Many seek their own glory through speech; if you keep quiet, you count for nothing. A silent heart and a closed mouth is the gift God is proposing to you so that you will acquire humility.

Speech was created in time; silence belongs to eternity. Love silence. By it you already enter the world to come.

ON WORK

We must love God with our whole heart and our whole soul, but with our whole body too. The body also has a right to love's enlightenment. You love God with your whole body and all your strength by fasting, vigils and prostrations—but even more with the manual labor that frees you from many illusions and keeps you balanced and humble.

We work night and day, so as not to be a burden on anyone," says the Apostle (I Th. 2:9); and "these hands labored to meet my needs and those of my companions" (Acts 20:34).

Before busying yourself about asceticism, see that you carry out your work well. It's a question of justice. People in the world are worried and wearied trying to feed spouse and children by their labor, pay taxes, make donations to the poor and the Church; and we, under the pretext of praying, would sit there like a lump on a log! Be sure of this: work accomplished in obedience, without the attraction of gain, shutting out all disturbance and all activism, doesn't separate us from prayer; on the contrary: when the body is occupied in these humble tasks, the heart finds itself free and more attentive to God's presence.

The Egyptian monks measured the intensity of their novices' interior life, and their progress in patience and humility, by their application to work.

It is traditional in our monasteries to work not only for our own subsistence, but also to nourish the pilgrims and the guests passing through; we must also work to assist the poor. When your labor seems particularly burdensome and the sun is beating down on your shoulders, think of Judgment Day: "I was hungry and you gave Me food."

Work: there's your asceticism. Look for what is most laborious, what the brethren dislike doing. That's where the Holy Spirit will

come to visit you and place in your heart treasures of love and humility.

Don't choose your work. Do what they ask you to do, and you will find peace. If they ask you to choose, pick what will keep you humble; otherwise, because of your vanity, your work will estrange you from God.

It's useless to speak of asceticism, spirituality, love and humility when we don't work. As Saint John says, "Let us not love in word, but in action and genuinely."

Many monks are lost because of their idleness. The best remedy against evil thoughts and vain imaginings is work that is lowly and tiring for the body.

Don't be watching to see if you're doing your work better than your brother. Why are you working--for your own glory or for love of God?

Do your work as best you can without worrying about the result. "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Above all, don't wait for compliments. Remember the Lord's word. Our service is useless: it has no value apart from the love we have for God and our brothers.

Disinterested work, done in peace and with love, is more pleasing to God than any ascetical prowess. You can fast and keep vigil, but if you're a burden to your brothers, what good is it? This is a question of realism and common sense.

Neither the lure of gain nor success should motivate your work, unless you're still seeking yourself. Be on guard too lest "worldly cares" take possession of your soul on account of your work. If you do it with a disinterested heart, and so that your spirit remembers your coming death, cares will have no hold on you.

Very few monks can devote themselves to intellectual work and keep their heart turned toward God. If they demand it of you and you stay nailed to your study table and your books, you'll find Christ's abjection quite as well as you would in other work. But you'll have a hard battle to wage preserving humility and keeping yourself from falling into the illusion that this learning will save you.

(To be concluded)

THOMISM TODAY

Sister Mary Margaret, O.P. Monastery of St. Dominic, Newark

As a theological and philosophical movement from the 13th century to the 20th, Thomism may be defined as a systematic attempt to understand and develop the basic principles and conclusions of St. Thomas Aquinas in order to relate them to the problems and needs of each generation. ... Thomists, in developing and defending the basic insights of their master, could not help but be affected by problems and polemics of their day. Consequently the term Thomism applies to a wide variety of interpretations of St. Thomas by those who have professed loyalty to his thought and spirit. 1

The period known as Second Thomism began in the 16th century in the countries that remained Catholic. The doctrinal problems put forth by the Reformation made a vital demand for their reexamination in the light of Sacred Scripture, apostolic tradition, and systematic theology. This occasioned a revival of St. Thomas' works.

Second Thomism was already declining when the French Revolution brought it to an end. By the second half of the 18th century there was little interest in St. Thomas outside of the Dominican Order.

"Neo-Thomism is predominantly a rediscovery of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas that began early in the 19th century, developed slowly in Catholic countries of Europe, gained momentum through the efforts of Leo XIII, spread to most countries of the world, and survives in ... various forms".²

Neo-Thomism was thus recognized from the time of Leo XIII to that of John XXIII as a stable philosophical system and St. Thomas was the Catholic Doctor par excellence. "Much of the theological expertise required for Vatican II to reach its goal had been acquired during the Catholic intellectual renaissance stimulated by the revival of St. Thomas."

However, since Vatican Council II there has been a decline in the prominence given to St. Thomas. Nevertheless it is not true that he disappeared from sight in the intellectual world. Neo-Thomism as promoted by Jacques Maritain and E. Gilson in confrontation with existential thought is still very much alive and must be accorded due notice. Transcendental Thomism, which developed in confronting Kantianism and other forms of idealism, is more dubious. Its Thomistic content is unquestionably viable, but what it borrows from transcendental idealism is contestable.⁴

Pope John XXIII's intent that the Council be pastoral shifted the orientation from the fine points of speculation to the more practical side of Christian life. His desire that the Council give an impetus to Christian Unity had a similar effect since Thomism and scholasticism were both considered the special property of the Roman Catholic Church and might blur the ecumenical horizon.⁵

A closer look at the Council documents, especially the Declaration on Christian Education and the Decree on Priestly Formation, reveals that they did reaffirm the positions of Pius XII and Paul VI, both of whom advocated the method of Thomas Aquinas as the perennially valid philosophical heritage.

Catholic theology, to remain vital, must develop but it cannot develop in a healthy way cut off from its roots. As it dialogues with idealism, dialectical materialism, pragmatism, process philosophy and linguistic analysis it must preserve its heritage.

Modernity's rationalism, shaped by the Cartesian separation of mind and body, is being passed over by certain initiatives on the present-day theological scene. These innovative thinkers are forming new theological frontiers without stopping to engage in debate with modernity. The writings of St. Thomas are being utilized in these developments which are freeing Christian affirmation from the bonds imposed by the thought pattern of modernity. The modernizing slant given to St. Thomas' thought by transcendental Thomism is giving way to a more direct reading which supports the unity of mind and matter, spirit and body, moral self and moral agent; where meaning and truth share the same world evidenced in the linguistic practices of a community; and virtue is not individualistic and solitary but relational and communal.

Worthy of note in these new trends are the personalist Thomists, among whom the more prominent are John Paul II and the American, William Norris Clarke. Both of them have grounded their thought on St. Thomas' metaphysics of the person although they begin from different starting points. They affirm that since personal reality is the highest form of being we experience, it should be the primary light by which we interpret other forms of being.

Because the problems that contemporary disciples of St. Thomas are coping with are post-modern in that they arise from the collapse of modernity, they are being labeled post-modern thinkers. The fact that, although working independently of one another, those discussed and inferred here have all chosen St. Thomas as their master shows both the vitality of St. Thomas' intellectual tradition and a healthy dependence on the Church's speculative heritage.⁸

NOTES

- ¹ J. A. Weisheipl, "Thomism" <u>The New Catholic Encyclopedia</u> Vol. 14 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967) 126.
 - ² Weisheipl, "Neoscholasticism" Vol. 12: 1165.
- ³ Gerald McCool, "The Tradition of St., Thomas Since Vatican II," Theology Digest 40:4 (Winter, 1993) 324.
- ⁴ William A. Wallace, O.P., <u>The Elements of Philosophy A</u> <u>Compendium for Philosophers and Theologians</u> (New York: Alba House 1977) 327.

Avery Dulles, "Vatican II & Scholasticism" New Oxford Review May 1990: 5, 10.

- ⁵ Dulles, 5, 6.
- ⁶ Dulles, 8, 10.
- 7 J. A. DiNoia, O.P., "American Theology at Century's End: Postconciliar, Postmodern, Post-Thomistic." (Symposium, Angelicum University, Rome, May 4-5, 1990) 16-22.
 - ⁸ McCool, 325.



IMAGO'S JOURNEY

Sr. Mary Thomas, Buffalo

(A one-act play based on <u>Perpetual Angelus</u> by Romanus Cessario, O.P., published by Alba House in May, 1995)

CHARACTERS: Imago, Grace of the Word, Mary, Gabriel, Various Saints

PROLOGUE - late afternoon

Imago, a poor peasant boy, sits despondently on a hillock. He picks a blade of grass, chews on it idly, and sighs. A flute is heard offstage playing the first phrase of Summit hymn 371. Imago raises his head and looks around wonderingly, struck by the beauty of the sound. As the melody dies away, enter Grace of the Word. She wears a flowing, iridescent robe and a gold-colored veil She moves toward Imago, smiling. During the following dialogue the guitar picks up the melody of S-371 with simple running chords played softly in the background.

Imago: Oh-h-h! Who are you? He draws back a little.

Grace: Don't be afraid! I'm Grace ... Grace of the Word. What's your name?

Imago: Imago.

Grace: Imago! That's a beautiful name. It means you're an image. What's your last name?

Imago: I have no last name. I'm just Imago.

Grace: But you must have a last name. Everyone does.

Imago, shaking his head sadly: But I don't. You see, I'm an orphan. I have no family. No one knows where I came from. There's no last name for me, Grace.

Grace: But you said your name is Imago. That means you're an image of somebody. An image has to be an image of SOMEONE. Don't you understand? It means you belong to someone.

Imago (aside, to himself, dreamily): I belong to someone -- I? I wish that were true! I wonder if it could be ... oh, if ONLY ... But that's what she said ... (with determination) I'm going to find out.... Grace watches the change coming over him, and moves closer. He looks up at her earnestly. Do you really think--- Oh, Grace, how can I find out who I really am?

Grace: Would you like me to help you, Imago?

Imago: Oh, yes, I would! He pauses, then adds emphatically, Oh, yes, please, Grace! How will we do it?

Grace: We'll have to go on a journey, Imago, through countries you do not know. But they are countries I know very well, and if you let me guide you, you won't get lost. And I promise you, we'll find out who you are, whose *image* you are. And we'll find your family, your mother and your father, and your home. Do you really want to come with me, Imago? Are you ready to leave everything and just come?

Imago: Oh-h-h! Yes, I'm ready! I don't really have anything to leave, Grace. You see, I just don't have anything at all!

Grace: (aside) He doesn't have anything at all! If he only knew how fortunate he is! (then turning to Imago) Very well, then, Imago, I'll come for you early tomorrow morning. (Grace moves slowly offstage as Imago stands watching her incredulously, then rubs his eyes as if it has all been a dream. Curtain.

SCENE I: THE ROSE GARDEN - early the next morning

Rose light over a garden scene with rose bushes. Grace and Imago enter through a small door at back.

Imago (looking around the garden in wonder) Oh! How beautiful! What is this place? Whose garden is this, Grace? Will they mind our being here?

Grace: This is one of the Gardens of the Rosary, Imago -- the Garden of the Joyful Mysteries. Anyone who wishes may come here. It is taken care of by the Patriarch Benedict, and belongs to my Lady. As long as you are small enough to come through the door, my Lady welcomes you.

Imago: Your Lady? Who is she, Grace? What is her name?

Grace (joining her hands): Holy Mary, Mother of God ...

Imago (joining his hands like Grace): Holy Mary, Mother of God...but-- but, I don't see her, Grace! Where is she?

Grace: She is here, Imago, she lives in the garden. But you cannot see her yet. You have to believe in her. You have to look through eyes of faith.

Imago: Faith? What is that?

Grace: Faith is a gift. It is free, and you have received it. It is yours, now, because my Lady asked that it be given to you.

Imago (rubbing his eyes): Eyes of faith ... so that I can see — (he looks towards a rosebush, backstage, which seems to be moving): Oh Grace, look! That rosebush! Someone is coming out of it! (St. Benedict, in dark habit with hood over his head, emerges from the rosebush and advances quietly towards Imago.) Oh! Who are you, sir?

Benedict, (smiling): I am the gardener, lad. Don't be afraid! I tend the roses in Our Lady's psalter. Would you like me to show them to you?

Imago: Oh, yes, please, sir, I'd love to see the roses -- but what is a psalter?

Benedict: Prayers, son. They are like roses. They should be succinct, that is, simple, and direct. When you pray, you must be very silent, so as to hear the Word of God which comes to you with every mystery. The light of faith, and the practice of good works, will enable you to march forward under the guidance of the Gospel. The joyful mysteries will give you a good start on your pilgrimage. (There is a sound of rustling. Benedict turns and points to the rosebush in the other corner.) But look, here is a friend to help you!

Imago, (turning and gasping in surprise): Who -- who are you?

Gabriel (comes forward in a bright robe, with wings; Imago draws back in awe.): I am Gabriel. I was sent to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and I said to her, 'The Lord is with you ... you will give birth to the Son of the

Most High ... the Holy Spirit will overshadow you'. I also spoke with Joseph about this virgin: 'She will bear a son', I told him, 'and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'. (A slight figure in a Carmelite habit steps out from another rosebush and draws near to Imago reassuringly.)

Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity: Do not be afraid, Imago! Let me tell you more about the virgin. She kept herself so little, so withdrawn before God in the secret of the Temple, that she drew the delight of the holy Trinity.

Imago: She kept herself little? Then--it is good to be little?

Elizabeth (nods and smiles, then gestures to a fourth figure coming from the rosebush. Look, here comes Bernadette, to share a secret with you! (Bernadette, in a simple skirt and jacket, with a peasant shawl over her head, walks quietly up to Imago.)

Bernadette: Imago, it is very good to be little. It was because you are little, like me, and poor, like me, that you could come with Grace through that small door into Our Lady's garden. And if you remain little, you will hear many wonderful things here, and you will even begin to discover the answer to your question ... to find out who you really are...

Imago: You mean, I will find my family?

Bernadette: Yes, Imago! You will begin to find your family when you look deeply into the mysteries in the rose garden.

Imago: Mysteries? What do you mean, Bernadette?

Bernadette: Simply this, Imago: God humbles himself in His Incarnation to prove His love for us.

Imago: His love for US? You mean, for me too? (turns to Grace) Does God love ME? Grace: Imago, God loves you so much that He would have sent His Son to this earth if you had been the only person in the world. It is He who sent me to you, to guide you to this garden of Our Lady, so that you might come to know Him.

Imago: I've always been afraid of God -- He is so great, and I'm so small...

Grace: He knows that, Imago. That's why He comes to you through Our Lady. And that's why He comes as a little Child. You can open your heart to this mystery, Imago, because you have received the gift of faith. Do you see?

Imago rubbing his eyes once more: Yes! Now I see! It's a mystery, but it's a mystery of joy! There is the Virgin, Our Lady, and her Child. But Grace, what does all this have to do with who I am, with my family that you said you'd help me find? Who can tell me? (As he speaks, Therese comes through another rosebush in a Carmelite habit.)

Therese: Imago! Imago! I have some roses for you! (She playfully tosses some roses to Imago, who catches them, then laughs in delight.)

Imago: Oh, thank you! But who are you?

Therese, laughing, evading his question: That's an important question, Imago, almost as important as the other one, 'Who are YOU?' But before I answer you, I have a confession to make. I was listening behind the rosebush, and I heard you say just a minute ago that you'd always been afraid of God. It was too much for me, Imago, I just had to come out and talk to you. She comes up to Imago and smiles at him teasingly.

Imago: Grace, who is this little mischief? I feel as if I'd seen her somewhere...

Grace: Of course you have, Imago. Her picture is all over your village, in shops, and churches, and wayside shrines. She is-

Imago: Therese!

Therese (laughing) Yes, I'm Therese, but I have lots of other names, too: Fledging, Little Grain of Sand, Toy of the Child Jesus...

Imago: Oh, how I envy you, Therese! You have lots of names, and I don't even have one!

Therese: But you do, Imago! You just don't know it. That is, not yet. But you will. We'll all help you to find out who you are. You've made a fine beginning in Our Lady's Rose Garden. You've learned how lucky you are to be little and poor, and you've discovered the secret of the roses, that you must be very quiet in order to hear what they have to tell you. You mustn't stop here, though, Imago. You must continue on your pilgrimage. Grace will be with you to guide you, and we will come too. Hurry, let's move on! We have a long way to go, and (she looks up at the sky and all around the rose garden intently) do you know, I think there may be a storm coming up! Come on, everybody, let's hurry! All exeunt. Curtain. Choristers sing S-275 in parts.

SCENE 2: THE PURPLE FOREST - noontime

A dark wood. Purple light on the trees and characters. Occasional flashes of lightning; an owl hoots; offstage, guitar plays a foreboding melody. Imago and Grace enter. Imago looks around fearfully, then draws closer to Grace.

Imago: Grace, where are we? All of a sudden, everything has gotten so dark! We were walking along the country road, and the sun was shining, and the clouds were so beautiful. I hadn't noticed how late it was getting, until-- but what IS this forest, Grace? How did we get into it, and how do we get out? And where is everybody? where did they all go? (He shudders and looks up at her, frightened.) Are we lost, Grace?

Grace (smiles reassuringly): Don't be afraid, Imago. This is the Purple Forest. Notice how all the trees are touched with purple? And all our friends are still with us--it's just that you can't always SEE them--only when they want to talk with you--

Imago (looking around on all sides fearfully): Oh, I see. I mean, I don't see, but I see what you mean, Grace. So this is the Purple Forest! Yes, you're right!. All the leaves of all the trees do look purple. (Brings his gaze back to Grace's face.) Oh, Grace! Even you, Grace! You've turned purple, too!

Grace: Yes, Imago, and so have you. This is what happens when you come into the Purple Forest. But you mustn't mind. No harm can come to us here. The Purple Forest is a good place, a very good place to be. We will not be staying long, but while we're here-(a small figure emerges from the trees at back of stage) --Oh Francis, it's you! Come and meet my young friend Imago! This is Francis, Imago. (looks toward Francis again.) There is so much you can tell him, and it will help him in his search!

Francis (comes up spryly in brown habit): Search? What are you searching for, lad? (smiles cheerfully at Imago, then turns to Grace) What did you say his name was? Grace: Imago.

Francis Imago? Imago what? You can't just be an image, you know. You have to be image of Someone, or Something.

Imago, ruefully: Yes, I know. That's what I'm looking for, Sir Francis, and Grace is guiding me. We're trying to find out my father's name ... my family. Can you help us?

Francis: Yes, lad, I will do all I can to help you, since you have come to the Purple Forest. This Forest holds deep secrets, Imago, and whoever lingers within its shadows willingly, learns many things. Would you like me to teach you?

Imago: Oh yes, please, Sir Francis. But first, can you tell me why everything in this Forest is purple?

Francis (rests a hand lightly on Imago's arm): Come, let us rest awhile. (Francis draws the two over to a low seat at left, sweeps aside some branches and motions to them to sit down with him. They settle themselves.) Now, let me tell you about the Purple Forest.

Imago (more relaxed): It's not so frightening in the forest, with both of you here.

Francis: Of course it's not frightening! As Grace told you, the Purple Forest is a very good place to be.

Grace: A very good place indeed ... (joins her hands) Holy, holy, holy!

Francis: You must know, Imago, that from my youth I had a special veneration for the passion of our Savior, and because I have loved this mystery so profoundly, it has transformed me. You see a poor little man in a ragged brown robe, but (he turns up the cuffs of his long sleeves, revealing red wound marks in the palms of his hands, then lifts the hem of his robe to show similar marks on each foot) but Love has transformed me into His own Image, the very image of our crucified Lord. I have lived here in this forest ever since, abiding in the Love of Christ.

Imago, (deeply impressed) All alone, Sir Francis?

Francis: Never alone, lad! Always with Christ and His holy Mother, plunging into His mysteries. And in His pierced Heart I have found everyone in the whole world, from the first man that ever was, to the very last man who will live upon our planet. They are all in the Heart of Christ.

Imago: Am I there too?

Francis: Of course, Imago. His Heart is like a warm nest, and you are a little fledgling....

Imago: A fledgling! But Grace, wasn't that one of Therese's names?

Grace: Yes, Imago! She is a fledgling, and so are you. Both little ones. (Turns to Francis) Francis, will you tell Imago about some of the mysteries you have plunged into so deeply?

Francis (nodding in assent and placing his hand gently on Imago's shoulder): It was the Father's will, Imago, that his blessed and glorious Son, whom He gave to us and who was born for our sake, should offer Himself by His own blood as a Sacrifice and Victim on the altar of the cross, and this, not for Himself ... but for our sins, leaving us an example that we may follow in His steps.

Imago: You say that our Redeemer was born for our sake, Sir Francis. Can you explain this to me? Why did He come down to our earth?

Francis: (cocking his head to one side) Thomas! That's the same question that Thomas asked!

Imago: Thomas? Who is he?

Francis: A wonderful friend, Imago. A friend of my father's, that is. He would love you, and he would love your name, and your question, because it is beautiful, and therefore true.

Imago: But how would he answer it? Why did God become man? Was it only so that He could save us, or would He have come down to earth anyway?

Francis: Thomas would say, in fact he did say, Imago, that if there had been no sin Christ would not have come. We read in Scripture, and Scripture is God's own word, that He came to save us from our sins

Grace: So that where sin abounded, grace might abound still more. It was Paul who said that.

Imago (nods eagerly): I wish I could learn more about what Christ suffered for us.

Francis: Here, in the Purple Forest, you may ponder on all His sufferings, one by one. That is what all His friends do. (Therese enters and stands listening as Francis continues.) Gethsemane was a place of intense loneliness for Jesus, of almost total dereliction as He faced His passion... The inner reality remained hidden from His disciples.

Therese: Many rejoice to follow Christ as long as He consoles them, but few are found who are ready to accompany Him into the Garden of Olives.

Francis: Imago, it would be well for you to ponder all the mysteries of the Lord's passion. His scourging, which so devastated His body, supplies a concrete image of what sin does to our souls.

Therese: In order to be a spouse of Christ, we must resemble Jesus, and He is all covered with blood ...(Imago looks distressed at her statement. She smiles at him and adds:) No, I am not one of those souls who love suffering, and even desire it. No, I love only the will of God. (Imago, reassured, returns to Grace and looks up at her appealingly.)

Grace: Always remember, Imago, that the sufferings you have to endure are meant only to draw you closer to Christ, for He said to His apostles, 'I have said this to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'.

Imago: So being little and poor and alone, and not knowing where I came from, will bring me closer to God?

Francis: Imago, when you are little and poor and alone, nay, more, when you are drenched with rain, frozen stiff by the cold, and tortured by hunger, and when you knock at someone's door and the owner tells you angrily, 'Get out of here!' --when you bear all this with patience, without murmuring, thinking about the sufferings of the blessed Christ, then you will discover perfect joy.

Imago: But I don't know if I could do that, Sir Francis. I am so weak!

Therese Let me share my secret with you, Imago. I knew my weakness better than anyone, I think. But gazing at the suffering face of Jesus, I whispered to Him, 'What does it matter, my Jesus, if I fall at every moment, for then I face my weakness and there is great gain in that for me, for You see what I am capable of doing, and so You will be more tempted to take me in Your arms'.

Imago: Oh, little There'se, how comforting that is!

Therese: It is the Comforter Himself, the Holy Spirit, speaking to your heart, Imago. He has been leading you all along the way, and He is going to bring you to the end of your pilgrimage, and to the goal you seek, if only you cling fast to Him. (Raising her head and scanning the sky and the Purple Forest closely) But look! the clouds are breaking! The storm is over! It is time for us to leave the Purple Forest, to be on our way. Hurry, hurry! I hear the melodies of the Homeland ... oh, the Homeland!

Curtain. Choristers sing S-78.

SCENE III - THE GOLDEN SEA - that evening

Sunset. Amber light over a field and strip of beach and over the water which stretches to the horizon. Imago and Grace enter. In the background guitar plays softely.

Imago (looking toward the sea): Oh, Grace, how beautiful the water is with the sun on it! Do you realize, this is the first time I've ever seen the ocean? We must have come a long, long way since this morning! How far, do you think?

Grace: Distances are different for the soul, Imago. We haven't travelled miles; we've travelled worlds. We're on the edge of a new one, now. (Points out over the water) Look out there as far as you can see. Look all the way to the horizon ... and then look beyond it, if you can.

Imago (squinting and shading his eyes): I can't, Grace!

Grace: That's because your feet are still in this world. Out there, just beyond the horizon, lies the world of Glory.

Imago: What is glory, Grace?

Grace (smiles gently, leads him to a hillock where they sit): Glory is something beyond all that you can imagine, Imago. The sea is an image of it. It goes on and on, forever, and it is lit up with the golden light of Love. When you step into glory--

Imago: I step into glory? But how? How could I ever do that?

Grace: Glory will flow into you, Imago. (She looks across the stage, where a figure in a Dominican habit and capuce has just entered.) Here is someone who can tell you about glory, Imago. This is Father Dominic, who spent his life pondering the glory of Christ, and then sharing what he pondered with others, and first of all with his daughters and sons. He wanted to kindle the light of Christ's glory in them. With Dominic to guide us, the glorious mysteries will reveal little by little 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'.

Dominic (joins Grace and Imago and turns to the horizon): Truly, it is in the face of Christ that we discover the glory of God. It is by pondering His glorious mysteries that we, too, begin to reflect His glory over the world. These glorious mysteries transform us, Imago. 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come'.

Imago: Oh tell me, Father Dominic, please tell me more about these glorious mysteries! I want to reflect them, too!

Dominic: Indeed you shall reflect them, Imago! That is your destiny, and it is the meaning of your name. 'Ever since you began your journey with Grace, you have come closer and closer to what you are seeking, and (pointing to the golden sea) when you plunge into the depths of the glorious mysteries, you will find it!

Imago: But how can I plunge into the sea, Father Dominic? I don't know how to swim! Dominic (as a figure in a threadworn black cassock enters at left): Here is someone who can tell you, Imago. This is Father John Marie Vianney.

St. John (looks first at Dominic, then at Imago): We don't have faith. If we had faith, we would see what the saints see: heaven everywhere, the angels, the good God.

Dominic: Faith, yes! As St. Paul tells us, 'If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is vain'.

Imago: I wish I knew more about faith!

St. John: Faith accomplishes everything, Imago. (Joins his hands, lowers his head) My God, give us faith and we will love you with our whole hearts. (Raises his head) And faith leads on to hope! Hope makes us happy on earth, but the lukewarm Christian can never comprehend this wonderful hope of heaven, where Christ ascended to prepare a place for us.

Imago: To prepare a place for us! A place in heaven? What does that mean?

Grace: You are very close to finding the object of your search, Imago! Yes, it is true! Our Savior, Jesus Christ, ascended into heaven so that you might follow Him. He said to Mary Magdalen, 'Go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God'. This means that you have--

Imago: that I have a Father in heaven! Then, GOD IS MY FATHER, AND HEAVEN IS MY HOME!

Dominic: Yes, Imago! You have a Father, and you have a home!

Imago (increasingly happy and eager): And how can I go there? How can I find my Father at last?

Grace: Jesus told us, 'The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things'.

St. John: It's a matter or remembering Who it is that guides us, Imago. When we are led by a God of power and light, we cannot err. For just as glasses make objects look bigger than they are, the Holy Spirit makes us see the difference between good and evil in capital letters.

Imago: I want the Holy Spirit! I want Him to lead me home! (He stops short, suddenly remembering something and turning to Grace.) Grace, I still need to know -- I mean, if I have a Father, and a home, I must have a Mother, too! Where is my Mother?

(The Solesmnes Salve Regina sounds offstage as a figure approaches from the horizon. It is Mary, clothed in white with a blue veil and mantle. She moves to center stage and all the characters surround her revently. Imago watches shyly from a little distance. Mary smiles graciously at Grace and the saints. Then she looks beyond them to Imago.)

Mary: Imago, my child! She holds our her arms in a welcoming gesture and the saints step aside. He runs quickly to her and she embraces him. Then he stands back and looks at her wonderingly.)

Imago: Then you are -- you are my Mother?

Mary: Yes, my own child! I am your Mother.

Imago: I--I don't know what to say! (he hears a slight movement behind him. It is Bernadette. She puts her hand on his arm and looks up at Mary)

Bernadette: O Mary, tender mother, behold your child who can do no more. See his needs. Have mercy on him, see to it that one day he is in heaven with you.

Therese, entering and going to the other side of Imago addresses Mary: Soon, in the lovely heavens, he is going to see you, you who smiled on him at the dawn of life. Come, smile at him again...

Imago, pulling back: But-- but, I am not ready to go home to heaven. (He looks at the beautiful and radiant Virgin Mary, then looks at his shabby clothes.)

St. John: The more we are sinners, Imago, the more she has tenderness and compassion for us. She is like a mother who has many children, and she is always busy running from one to another.

Dominic: Listen to the Word of God, Imago: 'Those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son'--

Elizabeth of the Trinity:..and those whom He predestined He also called---

St. Francis: and those whom He called He also justified--

St. Therese: And those whom He justified He also glorified. Imago, this daring ambition of aspiring to great sanctity never left me, I didn't rely on my own merits, because I had none. Rather, I put all my confidence in Him who is virtue, Who is holiness itself.

Imago: Then there is hope for me! I will put my hope in Mary, and she will get me ready to come home at last.

Grace: Imago, you are almost ready now. But isn't there something you have forgotten? Imago (delirious with joy): Forgotten? What is it, Grace? I am so happy I can hardly think! You have brought me through the Rose Garden of the joyful mysteries, and the Purple Forest of the sorrowful ones, and now we are on the shore of the Golden Sea, and I can look across the waters of the glorious mysteries to the horizon, and to that other world of heaven -- what more is there to look for?

Grace: Your name, Imago--I mean, your last name. Every "image" has to be an image of someone, or something, don't you remember?

Imago, wrinkling up his forehead: Oh yes, of course! I remember now. (He looks at St. Dominic) What was it that you said a minute ago-- about those whom God foreknew--that He also predestined them to become--

Dominic; to become the IMAGE OF HIS SON!

Imago: THE IMAGE OF HIS SON! My name! Oh, Father Dominic, I've found it! At last, I've found out who I am: IMAGO DEI! Curtain. Choristers sing S-108.

END



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